

House of Commons  
Education and Skills Committee

**SECONDARY EDUCATION:  
VISITS TO BIRMINGHAM  
AND AUCKLAND**

Second Report of Session 2002–03

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Education and Skills Committee

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VISITS TO BIRMINGHAM  
AND AUCKLAND**

Second Report of Session 2002–03

*Report, together with  
Proceedings of the Committee and  
Minutes of Evidence*

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## EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE

The Education and Skills Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Department for Education and Skills and its associated public bodies.

### Current Membership

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Mr David Chaytor MP (*Labour, Bury North*)  
Valerie Davey MP (*Labour, Bristol West*)  
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The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in S.O. No.152. These are available on the Internet via [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk)

### Publications

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### Contacts

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### Footnotes

In the footnotes of this Report, references to oral evidence are indicated by 'Q' followed by the question number. References to written evidence are indicated by the page number as in 'Ev 12'.

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# SECOND REPORT

**The Education and Skills Committee has agreed to the following Report:**

## **SECONDARY EDUCATION: VISITS TO BIRMINGHAM AND AUCKLAND**

### **Introduction**

1. In summer 2002, the Committee decided to undertake an extensive inquiry into secondary education. Following our recent work on Higher Education and Early Years Education, we decided that the Committee would devote a substantial period of time to examining four major issues in secondary education, namely: diversity of provision, pupil achievement, teacher recruitment and retention, and schools admissions. We are examining the Government's policy of encouraging diversity of school type, in particular the specialist school programme, the evidence about why pupils from certain backgrounds perform poorly at school, the factors affecting teacher retention rates and the development of schools' admissions policies.

2. As a preliminary phase of our inquiry, we decided to spend time in two cities, one in England and one overseas, to get to grips with the issues facing secondary education and to look at different approaches to them. At home, we chose to look at Birmingham. Birmingham's local education authority was one of a very small number of LEAs described by Ofsted as an example to all authorities of what can be done, even in the most demanding urban environments.<sup>1</sup> The visit was not intended to evaluate the quality of education in Birmingham but to provide us with the opportunity to listen to the teachers and educationalists, partly through visits to schools and partly through formal evidence (much of what we learned in Birmingham was outside formal evidence sessions).<sup>2</sup> This groundbreaking, intensive visit took place between 16 and 20 September 2002.

3. Overseas we chose to look at education in New Zealand. Our visit in October 2002 was principally to Auckland but we also spent time in Wellington talking to the Ministry of Education, to parliamentarians and to others. The visit to Auckland was intentionally similar in structure to the Birmingham visit to enable the Committee to draw useful comparisons between the two education systems. Auckland and Birmingham are of comparable size and face similar educational issues. We did not take formal oral evidence in New Zealand; but we were able to discuss secondary education with teachers, students, parents, educationalists, ministers and parliamentarians.

4. We would like to thank warmly the many people who contributed to our wide ranging and extensive programme, while in Birmingham and Auckland. The successes and challenges of secondary education observed in two contrasting cities will inform the Committee throughout its work this year.

5. This Report highlights our key observations from the many discussions we held in schools, colleges and universities, the formal evidence we took in Birmingham and the extensive meetings we held with policy makers and educationalists. The Report outlines the approach for the secondary education-based inquiries this year. The oral evidence taken by the Committee in Birmingham is published with this Report, and the programme for both visits are annexed to the Report. We found many common themes in the challenges which face educators in Birmingham and Auckland. There is a great deal to learn from sharing experience of the many initiatives and policies which aim to raise standards of achievement in schools here and in New Zealand.

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<sup>1</sup> Ofsted / Audit Commission Inspection of Birmingham Local Education Authority – April 2002

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of Evidence taken before the Education and Skills Committee on 16 – 20 September 2002

## **Birmingham and Auckland**

6. Birmingham is a city with a population of over a million. It has the largest urban local education authority (LEA) in the UK. Birmingham includes areas of high deprivation; it is the 23rd most deprived local authority district out of the 352 districts in the UK.<sup>3</sup> Since the 1970s Birmingham underwent major urban regeneration. This regeneration highlighted the poor skill levels among the population and the lack of investment in education. In 1993 Birmingham took the unique step of setting up an Education Commission under the Chairmanship of Professor Ted Wragg to review the present and future needs of its education service. The Commission recommended a number of specific measures to be taken by the Education Department to raise achievement. Professor Tim Brighouse was appointed Chief Education Officer in Birmingham in September 1993 to implement the programme of reform.<sup>4</sup>

7. The LEA has worked hard with its schools to overcome the educational effects of this high degree of social and economic disadvantage. The recent Ofsted assessment of Birmingham's LEA indicated that since 1997 the attainment of pupils has risen, at almost all levels, at a rate faster than the national average.<sup>5</sup> Mike Tomlinson, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, said: "too often, challenging circumstances are cited as grounds for indifferent performance. However, this LEA has built on its earlier Ofsted report, the excellent work of its officers and members and the outstanding leadership of its chief education officer to use that challenge to deliver educational improvement. Birmingham, the second city, has a first class LEA."<sup>6</sup>

8. Much of the success of education in Birmingham has been attributed to imaginative political leadership and the dynamic personal leadership of Professor Brighouse. Ofsted had noted that "the leadership provided by the Chief Education Officer is outstanding, and has contributed significantly to the 'can do' and aspirational culture demonstrated by headteachers and others interviewed during the inspection, without which such a good rate of improvement is unlikely to have been achieved".<sup>7</sup> The timing of the Committee's visit to Birmingham allowed us to take formal oral evidence from Professor Brighouse before he left his position as Chief Education Officer.

9. In 1989 New Zealand radically altered the local and national arrangements for managing its schools and evaluating their performance. The educational reform abolished the regional education boards (similar to the British local education authorities). The resulting education system places responsibility for the governance of each school in New Zealand with that school's board of trustees, largely composed of parents, representing the local community.

10. Auckland is a large commercial city situated on the North island of New Zealand. Auckland, like many large cities, faces a series of educational challenges. It has a population of approximately 1 million – similar to the size of Birmingham. Auckland has a large ethnically diverse population. Unlike Birmingham, education in Auckland is not supervised by a local education authority. Auckland's schools work directly with the Ministry of Education and its agencies. We were particularly interested to examine the differences in the administration of education in both cities.

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<sup>3</sup> Defined as average of ward deprivation scores, in the LEA districts. Department for Transport Local Government and the Regions Indices of Deprivation 2000: Appendix C – District Level Summaries of the Ward Level Index of Multiple Deprivation.

<sup>4</sup> Professor Tim Brighouse was Birmingham's Chief Education Officer from 1993 until 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Ofsted / Audit Commission Inspection of Birmingham Local Education Authority – April 2002

<sup>6</sup> Ofsted, PRESS RELEASE: NR 2002-66, 10 April 2002

<sup>7</sup> Ofsted / Audit Commission Inspection of Birmingham Local Education Authority – April 2002

### **The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)**

11. PISA is an international study to assess the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students in literacy, mathematics and the sciences. It was first conducted in 2000 and will be repeated every three years. The study was commissioned by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and 32 OECD member countries took part.

12. We travelled to Paris in March 2002 to take formal oral evidence from the OECD regarding its international study.<sup>8</sup> The results of the first cycle revealed that the UK had performed well in the PISA study, although the disparity between high and low achieving pupils was greater than average. New Zealand was ranked third in the PISA study for mathematics and literacy examination results,<sup>9</sup> with only Finland and Korea producing a better performance. England was ranked 8th and 9th respectively.<sup>10</sup> New Zealand had also shown an interesting disparity between the highest and lowest performing results in its tests. We were particularly interested in the comparison of the English education system and that of a system which had produced a better performance and yet faced similar problems.

13. The success of an education system can be measured not only by the number of students who succeed, but by the number of students who fail. Generally children who are motivated to learn and supported in their education will succeed throughout the world, despite the differences in education systems. An education system which has the ability to successfully educate children without these advantages is a system worth studying. New Zealand's secondary education system had been recognised as one of the most effective in the PISA study. We were keen to see how New Zealanders tackled underachievement.

### **Diversity of Provision**

14. Birmingham has a great variety of secondary provision. During our visit to the city we were able to visit 13 schools, a pupil referral unit and a womens academy at a further education college. We were particularly interested in visiting schools which had applied for, or had been awarded, specialist school status and discussing with them their relationship with neighbouring schools, as well as learning and understanding what changes specialism had brought to their school.

15. Secondary education in Birmingham is provided through a combination of comprehensive schools, grammar schools, secondary modern schools,<sup>11</sup> specialist schools, single sex schools, faith schools and independent schools. The city is well serviced by public transport and this allows pupils access to the wide diversity of secondary school provision. Children travel across the city to attend specific schools. Although this diversity hides real problems for parents in exercising a choice with many pupils ending up in schools that they have not chosen. It is a system of parental preference not parental choice. Birmingham is home to the largest comprehensive girls school in Europe. Swanshurst Girls School serves a large catchment area made up of both local authority and private housing and recruits from 60 feeder primary schools. This school has a major impact on the intake of surrounding secondary schools which consequently have an extremely high gender imbalance.

16. We were able to talk to teachers and students from a variety of secondary schools about the pros and cons of working in an authority with so much diversity. We were keen

<sup>8</sup> Minutes of evidence taken before the Education and Skills Committee: Wednesday 20 March 2002, HC 711-i

<sup>9</sup> Average mathematics and literacy scores.

<sup>10</sup> The United Kingdom was ranked as 8th and 9th in the PISA mathematics and literacy tests.

<sup>11</sup> Birmingham LEA does not use the term secondary modern. It only makes a distinction between selective and non-selective schools. Non-selective schools are classified as comprehensive, regardless of their intake. The DfES does not use the term secondary modern, however it recognises the term as an acceptable category in its Annual Schools' Census.

to take forward the issues they raised with us into our Diversity of Provision inquiry this year.

17. On the issue of specialist schools, Professor Brighouse said the current specialist schools programme did “not help the issue of social justice and every kid getting a fair chance of developing their talents” and that “the sooner it is directed to all schools the better”.<sup>12</sup> Professor Brighouse believed that “every school should be a specialist school and they ought to have the resource that goes with it”.<sup>13</sup> Ms Owen of Bartley Green Technology College was also concerned that other schools would be disadvantaged by comparison to local specialist schools. She asked “what happens to those schools who are not special in any way? I do feel that something will have to be done about those schools because usually they are in the most challenging circumstances where they are fighting to hold the line and improve and then everybody else is getting this leg up and they are still trying to maintain their standards and are probably being berated for not having made more progress too.”<sup>14</sup> Since we went to Birmingham the Government has expanded the specialist school programme to enable, in theory, all schools to become specialist.

18. Professor Ted Wragg, Chairman of the Birmingham Education Commission,<sup>15</sup> was not in favour of schools being asked to raise money in the process of achieving specialist schools status “it seems to me like Robin Hood in reverse to give most to those who have it”.<sup>16</sup> He noted that a school’s ability to raise the £50,000 required was dependent on the location of the school and the support of local businesses.<sup>17</sup>

19. We were particularly interested in the model of secondary education suggested by Professor Brighouse, which encourages schools to work together in local groups (collegiates) to provide a co-ordinated response to the schooling needs of each area. We intend to look at this issue in greater depth in our inquiries.

20. New Zealand schools are categorised by a ‘decile’ system. This system classifies schools by the socio-economic status of its student intake and awards each school a budget based on this classification. We were pleased to visit schools with high and low decile status. We will explore the advantages and disadvantages of such a system during our forthcoming inquiries.

21. The education system in New Zealand has developed cultural immersion education for children of Maori or Pacific origin. These schools, more prevalent at the primary level, are designed to teach children about their cultural heritage and traditions alongside a full academic curriculum. We were particularly interested in the concept of celebrating a cultural background as a tool to raise pupil achievement as there is the dual benefit of children being able to learn from an early age in their mother tongue and greater hope for these languages that they will not be further marginalised in New Zealand.

### **Pupil Achievement**

22. The PISA study showed that both the UK and New Zealand had large disparities in pupil achievement. However, the two education systems are quite distinct and we were keen to compare the methods implemented by Birmingham’s and Auckland’s educators to raise pupil achievement.

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<sup>12</sup> Q.292

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Q.112

<sup>15</sup> The Birmingham Education Commission had revealed widespread dissatisfaction with education policy in the city and a disturbing level of under-achievement in its reports. There was evidence of a lack of resourcing and that the school building stock was in a poor state. The Commission recommended a number of specific measures to be taken by the Education Department to raise achievement.

<sup>16</sup> Q.20

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

23. New Zealand's schools operate in a decentralised system where individual schools have considerable responsibility for their own governance and management, working directly with the Ministry of Education and its agencies.<sup>18</sup> The Ministry of Education has established eleven regional offices which interact with schools at a local level. We were interested to note that this system had continuing issues with raising the achievement of underperforming pupils. Although the British system is more centralised and operates through local education authorities, teachers in this country are working hard to deal with very similar problems.

24. The degree of testing and examination in the English education system has been described as inappropriate. Whilst in Birmingham, many teachers told us that the key stage tests at 7, 9 and 11 were excessive and placed a huge demand on the student. The New Zealand system by sharp contrast has been described as suffering from a lack of assessment. Whilst in Auckland the Committee was surprised to discover that there was no statutory testing in secondary schools before the examinations at sixteen.

25. In Birmingham we took evidence from Professor David Gillborn and Dr Simon Warren of the Institute of Education, University of London, about their work on the academic achievement of Afro-Caribbean boys. We were particularly interested in his concern that "certain kinds of cognitive tests, which some people at the moment view as a way of getting past stereotypes, have systematically worked against black people".<sup>19</sup> Professor Ted Wragg told us that "between four and five times as many boys as girls are excluded from secondary schools for bad behaviour. Their exam results now are ten percentage points adrift compared with 0.9 of a percentage point in 1984."<sup>20</sup> We will take further evidence on this issue during our inquiry into pupil achievement.

26. The Ministry for Education in New Zealand told us that Maori and Pacific Islander students were over-represented in all classifications relating to poor performance. During our visit we were able to see the work undertaken in Auckland to raise pupil achievement. We will reflect on what the British system can learn from Auckland's work.

### **Teacher Retention**

27. We were told in the majority of the schools we visited in Birmingham that they had teaching vacancies. Schools located in more deprived areas found it difficult to attract teachers in shortage subjects. One headteacher told us that they had been forced to keep new teachers who were not up to the required standard because of the lack of applicants for the position. Another school however was very positive about the graduate teacher programme where more mature people who were switching from another profession could train while being in the school teaching. We found that there had been a mixed response to the graduate teacher programme in Birmingham. Teachers acknowledged that there was more money being fed into schools and this was reflected in the many new resources we saw whilst visiting the schools. All the teachers that we had the pleasure to meet during our visit were extremely committed to their job and to the children of Birmingham. Mr Arnott, headteacher of Stockland Green School, partly attributed the dedication of teachers in Birmingham to the work of Professor Brighouse. "We have had more resources and we have had somebody who has talked up education, who has challenged, who has supported us."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> A small number of schools require serious interventions by the Ministry of Education. In 2001 144 schools, out of the 2718 schools on New Zealand, required intervention. This could be compared with the 129 schools put in special measures by Ofsted in 2001.

<sup>19</sup> Q.191

<sup>20</sup> Q.6

<sup>21</sup> Q.129

28. Teachers in New Zealand had recently taken the Government to arbitration over wages and were surprised to be awarded a greater increase (20 per cent) than the teaching union had asked for (10 per cent). One of the main issues affecting schools in New Zealand is the high rate of temporary emigration of teachers to the UK, which was attributed to the considerably higher teacher salaries in the UK.

29. Our forthcoming inquiry into teacher retention has been greatly informed by our visits to both Auckland and Birmingham. We want to explore the support available for teachers and how this could be improved. We saw some excellent and innovative teachers during our visits and remain extremely grateful for the time they gave up to talk to us about their work.

### **School Admissions**

30. Birmingham has a complex variety of school admissions arrangements. Professor Brighouse was concerned that the current policy did not address many of the issues facing large cities. He told us that the Government needed to “be firm of purpose about stipulating criteria for admission and co-ordinated admission arrangements and about the issue of children who are excluded and then placed in another school, because the tendency is for the most highly-rated schools to kick children out when they are kicking over the traces, but then not accept others”.<sup>22</sup>

31. The Admissions policy in New Zealand is mainly based on the concept of zoning. When a school has too many children wishing to enrol, the Ministry of Education may allow a school to operate an enrolment scheme to prevent overcrowding. Many of the schools in Auckland have a local ‘zone’ and a child has a right to attend a school if they live within its zone. If a school is not full once it has accommodated all the children within its zone, those extra places can be offered to children from outside the zone. Preference is given to certain children (e.g. they have a sibling at the school) but most children have to go into a strictly controlled ballot for the remaining places. Extra places tend to be restricted, so the element of choice is very limited. Parents could try to exercise this ‘choice’ by moving in to the school’s zone or falsely claiming a right to attend the school. We were told that this system had various consequences which included the tendency of better-off parents to move into the zones of higher decile schools (schools with an intake of children from a richer socio-economic background). Both admissions systems had elements to recommend them and we will take further evidence on this issue during the final part of our secondary education inquiry.

### **Conclusions**

32. We began our inquiry into secondary education with two informative visits. We recognise that the Committee is not often able to explore policy issues with so many of the practitioners who work within the policies we examine. We were extremely grateful for the opportunity to do so on this occasion.

33. We have had the opportunity to examine education in two challenging urban environments. Both cities have experienced a variety of education policies over recent years designed to improve secondary education. It was interesting to visit Auckland, a city which had moved from a system very similar to our own to a extremely decentralised administration. Despite the obvious differences in structure, the PISA survey indicates that both education systems deliver a high standard of education to the majority of students. Both also continue to search for effective methods to raise the achievement of underperforming groups of students. We will continue to explore all the issues raised with us throughout our secondary education inquiry.

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<sup>22</sup> Q.291

## **ANNEX – Programmes of Visits**

### **Programme of Birmingham Visit**

#### **Monday 16 September**

- 12.00 Committee has a working lunch with Birmingham LEA – Birmingham Council House
- 14.30 Press Conference
- 15.00 Briefings by the Government Office for West Midlands and by Birmingham LEA
- 16.30 Private briefings by Ofsted
- 19.00 Formal oral evidence from Professor Tim Brighouse
- 20.00 Working dinner with Professor Ted Wragg and Professor Brighouse – Saasicaia Room, Hotel du Vin.

#### **Tuesday 17 September**

- 09.00 Committee divides: visits to Al-Furqan Primary School or Fairfax School
- 11.30 Committee divides: visits to Sheldon Heath School or Castle Vale School
- 14.30 Private meeting of the Committee
- 15.00 Formal oral evidence from Birmingham Race Action Partnership and Birmingham Partnership for Change
- 16.30 Formal Oral evidence from teachers
- 20.00 Open Forum: Committee meets Birmingham's parents at the Council House

#### **Wednesday 18 September**

- 9.00 Committee divides into three groups: visits to King Edward VI High School or King Edward VI Camp Hill School or Broadway School
- 12.00 Committee divides into three groups: visits to Four Dwellings High School or Allens Croft Primary School or Priestly Smith School and Perry Beeches School
- 15.15 Formal oral evidence from Headteachers
- 16.30 Formal evidence from School Governors
- 20.00 Dinner hosted by University of Birmingham

#### **Thursday 19 September 2002**

- 08.30 Committee divides: visits Oakdale centre (a pupil referral unit) or Turves Green Girls Technology College
- 11.30 Committee divides: visits George Dixon or The Women's Academy
- 14.45 Private meeting of the Committee
- 15.15 Formal oral evidence: Professor David Gillborn and Dr Simon Warren
- 16.30 Formal oral evidence: Learning & Skills Council for Birmingham & Solihull
- 19.30 Reception hosted by the Committee at Café Lazeez

#### **Friday 20 September 2002**

- 09.15 Formal oral evidence: Professor Tim Brighouse
- 11.30 Press conference
- 12.15 Working lunch with LEA

### **Programme of visit to Wellington and Auckland, New Zealand**

#### **Sunday 13 October 2002**

- 17.00 Briefing by British High Commissioner

**Monday 14 October 2002**

- 09.00 Meetings with Ministry of Education
- 11.00 Meeting with New Zealand Trustees Association
- 12.00 Working Lunch hosted by the British High Commissioner
- 13.30 Meeting at Education Review Office
- 15.00 Meeting with Education Forum
- 16.00 Meeting with National Education Monitoring Plan

**Tuesday 15 October 2002**

- 07.30 Breakfast meeting with New Zealand Education and Science Select Committee
- 09.00 Meeting with the Minister of Education
- 10.00 Visit to Association of Intermediate and Middle Schools
- 11.30 Fly to Auckland
- 14.00 Briefing by the Ministry of Education
- 14.30 Round Table Discussion with the Ethnic Education Group Forum

**Wednesday 16 October 2002**

- 07.30 Working breakfast hosted by the British Council
- 09.00 Committee divides: Visits to Mountain View Primary School or Macleans College Secondary School
- 12.30 Lunch hosted by Manakau Institute of Technology
- 13.30 Meeting with Community Stakeholders at Manakau Institute of Technology
- 16.00 Visit to Auckland College Education
- 18.00 Reception at Consulate General for the Marine Industry Association and GBR Challenge

**Thursday 17 October 2002**

- 09.00 Committee divides: Visits to St Ignatius Primary School or Southern Cross Campus Secondary School
- 12.30 Lunch hosted by the Forest Industry Training Organisation
- 13.30 Committee divides: Visits to CompeteNZ ITO or the Royal Oak Primary School
- 16.00 Meeting with PPTA union representatives at the Epsom Girls Grammar School
- 18.00 Reception hosted by British Consulate General

**Friday 18 October 2002**

- 09.00 Committee divides: Visits to Onehunga High Secondary School or Auckland Girls' Grammar School
- 13.30 Committee divides: Visits to the Royal Oak Intermediate School or the Kowhai Intermediate School

# PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE RELATING TO THE REPORT

MONDAY 3 MARCH 2003

Members present:

Mr Barry Sheerman, in the Chair

Mr David Chaytor  
Valerie Davey  
Jeff Ennis

Mr Kerry Pollard  
Jonathan Shaw  
Mr Andrew Turner

The Committee deliberated.

Draft Report [Secondary Education: visits to Birmingham and Auckland], proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 33 read and agreed to.

Annex agreed to.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Second Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chairman do make the Report to the House.

Several Memoranda were ordered to be reported to the House.

[Adjourned till Wednesday 5 March at Nine o'clock.]

## LIST OF WITNESSES

*Monday 16 September 2002*

Professor Ted Wragg, University of Exeter . . . . . Ev 1

*Tuesday 17 September 2002*

*BIRMINGHAM PARTNERSHIP FOR CHANGE*

Ms Sandra Oliver . . . . . Ev 12

*BIRMINGHAM RACE ACTION PARTNERSHIP*

Ms Joy Warmington . . . . . Ev 12

*BIRMINGHAM TEACHERS*

Ms Julia Blois, Wheeler's Lane Boys' School, Mr Roger Gittins, Head Teacher,  
John Willmott School, and Mrs Lynn Edwards, Saltley School . . . . . Ev 23

*Wednesday 18 September 2002*

*BIRMINGHAM HEADTEACHERS*

Mr Andrew Arnott, Headteacher, Stockland Green School, Mrs Ruth Harker, Headteacher,  
Bournville School and Sixth Form Centre, and Mrs Christine Owen, Headteacher, Bartley  
Green Technology College . . . . . Ev 44

*BIRMINGHAM SCHOOL GOVERNORS*

Mrs Monica Coke, Co-opted governor at Harborne Hill Secondary School, Mr Roy Gillard,  
Co-opted governor at Swanshurst Girls' School and Mrs Fran Stevens, Chair, Birmingham  
Governors' Network Executive Committee . . . . . Ev 53

*Thursday 19 September 2002*

Professor David Gillborn, Institute of London, University of London  
and Dr Simon Warren, South Bank University . . . . . Ev 64

*LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL FOR BIRMINGHAM AND SOLIHULL*

Mr John Towers CBE and Mr David Cragg . . . . . Ev 73

*BIRMINGHAM EMPLOYERS*

Mr Stephen Ellison, Ellison Webb and Mr Mark Linton, WorldCom . . . . . Ev 73

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## LIST OF UNPRINTED MEMORANDA

Memoranda have been received from the sources listed below. These have been reported to the House, but to save printing costs they have not been printed. Copies have been placed in the House of Commons Library, where they may be inspected by Members. Other copies are in the Record Office, House of Lords, and are available to the public for inspection. Requests for inspection should be addressed to the *Parliamentary Archives*, Record Office, House of Lords, London, SW1 (tel 020 7219 3074). Hours of inspection are from 9.30am to 5.00pm Mondays to Fridays.

Cadbury Schweppes [EB11]

Roger Daniels [EB13]

Birmingham Partnership for Change [EB14]

# MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

TAKEN BEFORE THE EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE

MONDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2002

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Members present:

Mr Barry Sheerman, in the Chair

Mr David Chaytor  
Valerie Davey  
Jeff Ennis  
Paul Holmes

Ms Meg Munn  
Mr Kerry Pollard  
Jonathan Shaw

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PROFESSOR TED WRAGG, University of Exeter, was examined.

## Chairman

1. On behalf of the Committee, can I welcome Professor Wragg to our proceedings and say what a delight it is that he was able to come and give evidence to the Committee formally? You will know that our Committee sometimes takes evidence formally outside of the House of Commons. We did so when we went with OECD and UNESCO to Paris in March, and we did before that when we did Early Years in Oxford. There have been some gaps since then. Sir Michael Bichard, when we did our away day—which was not an away day; it was a half day and it was not away—tried to look with us at how we best add value in the select committee. He said, “You do not get stuck in, in depth, enough.” That is a fair criticism. After a lot of thought, we decided we would come to a city and look at its education in depth over a period of a week. You are one of the reasons we are here because you wrote this report that I have before me now in 1993. The education system seemed to be failing, certainly not performing as well as it might. You wrote the Aiming High report and Tim Brighouse became the chief education officer. He is retiring at the end of this month. With a city of a million people with the biggest education authority, a history of improvement with a lot of targets still to meet—what an appropriate time to do this. This week we are going to be trying to get under the skin of what is happening. The select committee decided, just before the House rose, to concentrate on secondary education all this year. Many people say we have been away from mainstream education for too long. We certainly have in a sense but we have been productive. We have done a very well regarded report on Early Years a couple of years ago. We have done three reports on higher education and a report on individual learning accounts. We have been busy and adding value, but we come back to secondary education seriously. You might not know but we are looking at the government’s love affair with diversity and looking at whether that is good use of taxpayers’ money and whether it will encourage standards to rise. We are looking at recruitment and retention. We are going to be looking at those pupils that do not achieve, where it seems to be very difficult to bring out their talents, and we will be looking at admissions policies. We have a varied diet. We are going to be producing these as discrete reports as we go through, not waiting for one large report. To business. We know a great deal about your experience and we want to ask you for your help. We are about to spend a lot

of time looking at a whole range of schools. We are going to be meeting a university; we will be looking at a bit of primary and some FE. Mainly we will be looking at secondary. Can I ask you in opening to say what you found in 1993 in a nutshell and what you feel has been achieved?

(*Professor Wragg*) Interestingly enough, because I have been a specialist adviser to a select committee in Janet Fookes’ day, for those with long memories, with Bryan Davies and Robert Rhodes James and other distinguished Members, with Sir Anthony Meyer, I modelled the commission on the select committee process which I thought was excellent. We had 30 public sessions where people came along and gave evidence: community groups, governors, heads, teachers, unions, politicians, a very wide range of people, churches, faiths. It was all done publicly and we published the report in a similar style with a prose account and an account of what people had written in as well as a summary of what had been said. The process was very open. The reaction was very negative at that time. There was a strong feeling that Birmingham was failing its customers, its children, its parents and families. What I found remarkable is that the city council—and I mean by this all parties; it was not just the ruling group at the time—bit the bullet and said, “Fair enough. This is clearly not going well. Drastic action is needed.” We made 25 recommendations and when we reconvened two years later I think good progress had been made on 23 of those. Of the other two, the only one we were concerned about was at that time they had not made much progress on special educational needs. That changed after 1995 and they caught up. What Birmingham has done is it has run a successful, alternative model to what has been the mainstream model nationally. It is a model I intuitively feel much more sympathetic to and in tune with because it takes as its starting point that there is probably a fair amount of intelligent practice going on and at the same time does not duck the issue that there may be some bad practice going on that needs dealing with. Its starting point is a positive one. What the city has managed to do—and Tim Brighouse has played an enormous part in this—is harness the energies and enthusiasms of teachers in schools, parents and so on. For example, in 1993, when we took evidence, we invited people from the press. One of the witnesses was Ed Doolan who runs a personality broadcasting programme in BBC Midlands. He said he was buried under complaints from parents in his daily

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**[Chairman Cont]**

programme about education. Two years later, he said, "I do not know what has been going on here but I hardly ever get a complaint." I think that was because the whole thing opened up and a considerable challenge was issued to schools to do something. That means that in my experience of the morale of teachers in Birmingham, whilst teachers often feel as browned off as professionals do anywhere nowadays with shortage of money or being beleaguered or whatever else may be the problem, there has certainly been over the last eight or nine years a much greater sense of buoyancy and positiveness and a feeling that you are part of a team that is going somewhere than nationally. I think it is very noticeable to me, talking to teachers in schools.

2. There have been a lot more resources because before your investigations and your recommendations there had been a long period of low funding in education. Quite understandably, Birmingham, with the change in manufacturing base and the decline in jobs, had been looking for a new kind of role in employment terms, in finding an awful lot of resources away from education into other purposes. In a sense, it was a very under-resourced education authority.

(*Professor Wragg*) It was, but that was only one part of the problem. It was a significant part but resourcing was not the only issue. It certainly was the case that for whatever reason Birmingham, probably rightly in many ways, went for prestige buildings and institutions. It did neglect schools. I remember Jeff Rooker coming along and giving evidence saying they should sell the National Exhibition Centre and spend the money on education but that idea dwindled away.

3. He was quite a radical in those days.

(*Professor Wragg*) Yes. What was impressive was that they made an immediate change. They decided almost on the spot at their first meeting to put money into primary schools which had been particularly neglected. Birmingham had a terrible buildings problem because 40 per cent of its buildings were pre-1950 and there was a lot of dry rot around. Most of the newer, sixties buildings had wet rot so one way and another there was a lot of rot. It was just impossible to even stand still, such was the size of that kind of problem. What they did tackle was putting more money in and schools felt it straight away. By and large it was judiciously spent. It was not just festooned around. Schools really felt that they had got more money to do things and that they had greater value.

**Ms Munn**

4. I wanted to ask you something a bit more general about education. As you know, we are focusing particularly on secondary education and one of the concerns is that children appear to go backwards in terms of their achievement when they move from primary to secondary education. Do you have a view about whether some of that is about children just adjusting to wider environments and perhaps learning to socialise, to take more

responsibility for themselves and, to some extent, perhaps a bit of a loss of that achievement is actually a gain in social skills?

(*Professor Wragg*) The so-called year seven or year eight dip is part myth. It may well be that the scores go down slightly when you would expect them to go up. When children go to secondary schools, they take on an enormous amount compared with what they were doing before. If, for the sake of argument, they were to start algebra at the age of 11, they would probably spend less time on number, shape and space and the things that they did when they were in year six. To some extent, you would expect certain things maybe to not be quite as hot as they were when they were being drilled quite extensively for key stage two tests in year six. I am not sure that the dip is really a dip that matters. If there is a graph that goes like *that*, but it goes like *that*, it does not really matter. If it goes like *that*, it does matter. With the year seven or eight dip, what happens is that it picks up later and GCSEs and A levels and so on have continued increasing in terms of the kind of results. On the other hand, it is well known that when you have pressure in certain places in school, like 14 year olds, 16 year olds and 18 year olds, maybe the best resources are devoted there. I am not saying that the poorer teachers get given to younger pupils because many schools would be appalled if one suggested that, but it certainly is the case that it appears to be a lower priority in a high stakes assessment system. Nowadays people do what is called border-lining, as you know, where they try and get people on the border line, say, between C and D, and make sure that the ones heading for a D or a D/E get a bit of extra help and get over that critical C/D border line. That means that if you want to have smaller groups, more intensive teaching or whatever, someone else pays. Probably it is year eight. I am not convinced it is a big problem or one that injures people over the longer term.

5. What about also the developmental stage that young people are at? That is obviously a period of time when a lot is changing for them and they are growing up generally. Do you think we take enough account of that in what we expect of young people?

(*Professor Wragg*) Not really. It is known as jiggling hormones sometimes. Back in the early 19th century—we do not have figures for this but they do in Norway—girls started their periods at the age of 17. Now they start at the age of 12 on average. Girls go into the adolescent growth spurt at 12; boys at about 13 and a half or 14. It is a period when the things that go with growth, the angst and so on, the uncertainties of being neither child nor adult, can hit people. In former times, it would have happened much later, after they had left school. Probably the only time where the two coincide would have been when children left school at 15 and probably matured physically at about 15. There was a logical fitting of the first age at the point when people reached physical maturity. Otherwise, it has criss-crossed from leaving school early in Victorian times and maturing later to exactly the other way around. Certainly that is a factor. There are many aspects to adolescence. One important aspect that often gets neglected is that adolescence, particularly mid-adolescence, is a period of great idealism. A lot of young people belong to something for the only time

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*[Continued***[Ms Munn Cont]**

in their lives when they are about 15 or 16. They become cynical later on. Adolescents are regarded as people who are cynical because on the surface they are and yet I have lost count of the number of intense conversations you can have on a private basis with, say, a 13 or 14 year old that would not necessarily be in public, particularly with boys, because of this anxiety about appearing a bit soft or a bit intellectual and being ribbed by your mates, but it does not mean to say it is not there. It just means it is better concealed.

**Chairman**

6. Are you saying that what has been believed by many is that we lost a lot of kids from the social classes D and E or four and five at that age? These are bright kids, falling away up to the age of 11, going into the big school and we seem to lose them. Is that a myth?

*(Professor Wragg)* No, that is not. As with all these things, it is not evenly spread across social groups and social backgrounds; nor indeed across males and females. Males are more likely to drop out than females and more likely to become disaffected. They are more likely to be excluded for poor behaviour. Between four and five times as many boys as girls are excluded from secondary schools for bad behaviour. Their exam results now are ten percentage points adrift compared with 0.9 of a percentage point in 1984. Social class five, as it used to be called, is in danger of becoming even more detached and more isolated. It is a very differentiated dip. It is not just everybody goes down a bit and everybody comes back up again.

**Jonathan Shaw**

7. If young people get growing pains and have special needs, we are learning that the exclusion rate is so high in those two early years. You say it is a myth but there is such concern about it. We are seeing particular children from particular classes excluded. How is it a myth?

*(Professor Wragg)* It is part myth because it is assumed to be a devastating blow and if only it were fixed the grades would rise even higher. My argument was it gets compensated for later but it is not at all myth for certain people because it could be a crossroads for them. I know in your deliberations you will be looking at key stage three and possibly even key stage four. I have just chaired the Exeter Education Commission last year and we have come up with new plans for 14 to 19 education because we can see certain people reaching those crossroads and simply going the wrong way, just dropping out because they have become disaffected. Often there is not the challenging range of programmes available for them that they should start thinking about at around about year eight, as they come towards year nine and have to formulate their thoughts for the next phase.

8. What would you do with those young people?

*(Professor Wragg)* Which particular group?

9. The child who perhaps has behavioural problems or may have level two special needs and has a particularly close relationship with their primary school teacher, who manages to hang on to them and contain them and keep them there but then they go to secondary school. The first six months are okay and it becomes too much for them and they spiral downwards. Before you know it, they are excluded. They are into petty crime and they are causing all the sorts of difficulties that we know of to themselves, their parents and the community. What do you think the answer is?

*(Professor Wragg)* I have done two big research projects over the years where we looked at children starting the first month of primary school and the first month of secondary school. We sat in schools in September. You realise what a huge change it is. In Devon, where I live for example, we have a school in Exmouth, Exmouth College, which has 2,500 pupils. Many of the children who go there come from two or three teacher village schools. They go one day, at the age of 11, from having a teacher who may well have taken them for three years to ten people they have never seen before taking them for ten different subjects where they are one of 2,500 people. That is a very big change. I have always been in favour of a much better phased change. I would like to see a little bit more specialist teaching in the last couple of years of junior school so that people do get, not ten teachers because no primary school can do that, but certainly two or three different teachers. I would also like to see them being taught by fewer teachers in the first couple of years of secondary school, so that you do not have that tremendous change. Even though schools try to do programmes now where they take children into the school beforehand and teachers cross-visit and so on, it is only a token thing. The whole atmosphere changes considerably and goes from being pretty informal and intimate to being, however hard schools try if they are big secondary schools, much more detached with the possibility of people switching off.

**Valerie Davey**

10. One of the changes which might come about if the government persists, and I hope it will, is that more languages will be taught in primary school. I notice that you are a language teacher and I am wondering, in particularly the context where children do not have English as a mother tongue, how we can make them becoming bilingual a positive and very valuable experience. What are going to do about language teaching generally and in particular for those whose mother tongue is not English?

*(Professor Wragg)* I did a BBC Radio 4 series called Teach Your Child French. We tried to find out how many primary schools were teaching a foreign language. It varied in estimate from a quarter to a third but a lot of it was lunch time clubs, encouraging children to go to Saturday clubs and happening to have a couple of parents who were French and volunteered or having a teacher and putting lessons on. When I first started teaching, my wife was an infant teacher. I was teaching at a secondary school at that time and I taught six year olds German in the fine city of Wakefield. They loved it. They had a very

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**[Valerie Davey Cont]**

good ear and they found it very funny to learn a foreign language. I would be in favour of not starting at six but starting early-ish. When it comes to secondary schools, there is a problem because if people switch off, as they sometimes do, it can seem the most irrelevant and dreary subject; yet it should be a very interesting one. I went to a language specialist school in Wigan and it was a very exciting place. They have primary school children coming in. They have created all kinds of shopping and home environments throughout the school and adults were coming in as well. There should be a liveliness about languages. What I think should happen, as a linguist, is I have always felt we should start teaching language as an immersion course. I have taken children away for a residential weekend, where everything was done in a foreign language, but that is a weekend. It would be nice to start with a week of intensive, high quality teaching because that gives people a flying start. They feel they are making very slow progress at the beginning. There is nothing better than going home and saying things to your parents quite early on. If they are disaffected, I would always want to offer them the option of doing an *ab initio* course later on because there are a number of courses around now where you can teach yourself, say, Spanish or Italian, languages that children are likely to come across on holiday. It is a pity if they simply make the blanket judgment that they do not want to learn a language. On your specific point, this has become one of the richnesses of particularly urban education that we now have this tremendous diversity, particularly of Asian languages. I think that is something to be encouraged. We did a project where some of the schools were here in Birmingham and it was interesting for us to see a Punjabi speaker, for example, in the classroom, translating for children who had just arrived. Punjabi was given proper standing. It was recognised that children were going to be very fortunate one day because they would have two codes.

11. I have a pet theory that children who have two languages have twice as many brain cells.

(*Professor Wragg*) There may be something in that. There is now increasing evidence that the brain does develop. It is not just London taxi drivers who have more developed spatial intelligence. The part of violinists' brains that deals with fingers is better developed. It is quite clear that the kind of stimulus that you get from an activity like learning a language will have a positive impact on connections within the brain. The only problem with bilingual education is usually if there is an emotional disturbance. If you have two parents, one speaks one language and one speaks another and they fall out, the child gets split and the language has an emotional overtone, there is sometimes a problem. In general, having two languages is a considerable gain.

**Paul Holmes**

12. In the 1993 and 1995 reports on Birmingham, there was quite a lot of agonising about whether increasing target setting and testing is the best way to drive up standards. Seven years later, there are more

targets and testing than anybody would have dreamt of or had nightmares about. What do you think that tells us now? Has that driven standards up?

(*Professor Wragg*) No, and I am sick about it, because we never intended the kind of target setting that eventually got hijacked at national level. For us, target setting was an interesting internal process where a school would set its own targets to improve on what it had done before, but to have outside monitoring so that people could not set themselves dead easy targets and say how wonderful they were; or, if they set themselves targets that were lower, which they might if their population changed, for example, somebody externally would know about this and agree it. What we did not want to do was what eventually happened. Schools were given targets willy-nilly that were seen as threatening and not something they were committed to achieving. We wanted very much to get over the idea that if every school sets its own targets and tries to improve the city lifts. We also wanted the targets to be much broader than they are. For example, we wanted every child in Birmingham to have the right to have gone to a professional theatre performance, to go to a concert at the International Concert Hall, to take part in a field trip, to take part in a public performance. All these were targets but they were not the kind of targets which have become quite mechanical and in fact lead to deft footwork. A good example is border lining because you can say, "To hell with the As and Bs; they are home and dry. Who cares about the Fs and Gs? They are going nowhere. The Ds are the ones that can be pushed over and then we meet our target in terms of As to Cs." This kind of game that people end up playing I think is a misuse of targets in the end. I feel very sorry it went that way.

**Chairman**

13. You would not deny that there has been some cheating. The government and a lot of the education community celebrates the driving up of standards in literacy and numeracy.

(*Professor Wragg*) Yes. I ask myself why, if standards of reading have improved as much as they are said to have improved, is the evidence from other people who keep scores of other kinds of tests, which are not always exactly the same but test the same domain, not showing the same startling rise? Why has the work done at Durham not shown the same rise? Nor indeed has the National Foundation for Educational Research had to recalibrate its test. If you are running a national test with an average score of 100 and you then find it is 102, 105, 108 or 110, you have to recalibrate it. The NFER has left its reading test untouched for a number of years because the mean has stayed around 100. I have doubts about whether the improvements are genuine improvements in reading competence, for example, or whether they are part artefact because people get smarter at preparing children for tests.

14. What do you think we should try and get out of this Birmingham visit in terms of what the value added is, both for what we are doing in Birmingham and as a select committee? What do you think we should be looking for when we go on our visits and as we talk to parents, students, governors and teachers?

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**[Chairman Cont]**

(*Professor Wragg*) Warmth, life and imagination, for starters. Let me be frank about this. I think the national model that we have is not successful and I find it odious. The degree of prescription that there has been is unbelievable. I find it unbelievable that a whole nation of primary teachers, whether they were teaching five or 11 year olds, whether it was September or July, whether they were doing Boyle's law or Twinky Rides Again, was supposed to do a literacy hour which had 15 minutes of shared text for the whole class followed by 15 minutes of language work for the whole class followed by 20 minutes of group work followed by ten minutes of whole class revision. On what conceivable grounds? That seems to me absolutely the wrong way to engage professional people. The way to engage professional people is what has been done here. I wrote a piece in *The Times Educational Supplement* about it and I said it was like Brazil versus Antarctica because in Birmingham there has been a premium on people's imagination. That is what teaching is about. I am a great admirer of David Blunkett and I have known him for many years but when he said we must not reinvent the wheel he was completely wrong. If we did not reinvent the wheel, we would have wooden wheels, for a start. We would have no hovercraft. If doctors had not reinvented the leech, we would not have many of the things that we have now. Of course we have to reinvent things. It is helpful to give teachers ideas, support, possibilities and have websites and so on. I am all for that but what Birmingham has done which I think is a precious thing without being a slimy, sentimental thing to have done is to engage people's imagination and their commitment. That is something that anybody can try to do but not via national prescription. I am glad that there seem to be signs that the mania for national prescription is waning a bit. I hope it continues. I hope people look seriously at Birmingham and say, "What did they do to get groups of teachers together to think about their teaching and to feel that they are all part of the same crusade?"

**Mr Chaytor**

15. In your opening remarks, you suggested that Birmingham had a completely different model to the national model. You have told us what you are against in terms of national prescription. Can you tell us what happened because getting people together and letting their imagination rip is not going to be a model, is it? I am interested to hear specifics about how schools were supported by the local authority.

(*Professor Wragg*) The first thing that happened was that the clusters of schools were made to work effectively. If you go round the nation, everyone will tell you that they work in federations or clusters or whatever they choose to call them. Out of 333 primary schools, Birmingham had something like 17 regional clusters within the city. These schools were encouraged to work closely together. That again was a bit of a change because in theory schools were supposed to be in competition with each other. As Keith Joseph once said when I interviewed him for a Radio 4 programme, life is an inextricable mixture of competition and collaboration. I think the collaboration side of it was in danger of being lost.

First of all, they made the confederations of schools work. Secondly, because senior people like Tim Brighouse went into every school in Birmingham and so did his colleagues when they could, they got together. I went along and there were very good meetings where they would get head teachers together in groups of 20, for example, in a cluster and the chief education officer himself would be there, talking about what ideas they had, what the city was trying to achieve, where the weak points were. That seemed to me to be very positive, working through head teachers who hopefully would work with their colleagues. Collecting ideas was not left to chance. There was a deliberate policy, when a school appeared to be doing something worthwhile or a particular teacher appeared to be doing something worthwhile, to celebrate what that person had done and to find out the extent to which it might be generalisable. When you see somebody doing something that is interesting and appears to be working, teachers are very much persuaded by successful models. If you teach, you can look at somewhere and either say, "We could do that", "We could do it better" or even, "It is not quite what we need to do but we could modify it" or even, "It is so awful, I am sure we could do better if we put our minds to it", but at least you need to see the models. That is what Birmingham has done very well.

16. In terms of monitoring and improving the performance, how do the results in Birmingham schools compare with equivalent authorities and with national standards over the last seven or eight years?

(*Professor Wragg*) Birmingham improved faster than the national average rate, but you expect low performing schools or authorities to do that because they have more headroom. It is difficult to get an exact comparison for a place like Birmingham but if you look at the major cities Birmingham has appeared to improve faster. Part of the success is not just that its formal test scores improved, valuable though that is, but that they have done other things for young people in Birmingham in terms of opportunities. For example, the University of the First Age. There are a number of ideas where young people have been encouraged to develop their talents. The work they are now doing in special needs and inclusion which is something they did not do brilliantly in the early stages—that kind of thing. There are travelling children in Birmingham. There are different ethnic minorities. There was a strong feeling of alienation amongst African Caribbean families so they set up a special group that looked into whether or not more children really were being excluded from African Caribbean backgrounds. They found that they were and did something about it. I think it was that attempt to do something for all the groups that made a positive impact. Yes, their graph has gone up on test scores but it has gone up on humanity as well.

17. Before 1993, do you think one of the problems of the previous system was lack of diversity?

(*Professor Wragg*) There were many problems. I was quite shocked at how many problems there were. They were at all levels. The local authority was not thought to be serving schools well, particularly primary schools and not thought to be offering them

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**[Mr Chaytor Cont]**

advice on anything from the curriculum to finance on the scale that head teachers in particular were hoping for. There was a lot of quarrelling amongst the local politicians and I can say without being smarmy now that I am back in the city I was very impressed with the politicians I met of all parties. I felt it was a pity that they were falling out rather more than local politicians often do. It was not that they became close friends immediately thereafter but there was a lot more of a feeling that politicians were working on the side of schools. For example, the grant maintained schools complained that they felt they had been rubbished by the ruling group within the city. That kind of thing stopped. It did not mean to say that people had changed their minds about grant maintained schools; it just meant that they did something more positive about it. Wherever you looked, things needed doing and quite a bit was done.

**Jeff Ennis**

18. It is almost nine years since your commission produced what I consider to be a very readable, excellent report. During the course of those nine years, there is no doubt that the role of LEAs has diminished quite considerably. In fact, eight out of 33 pages in your report specifically refer to the role of the LEA. In some of the answers you have already given, you have said what a crucial role the LEAs played in terms of getting the confederation of schools working more cohesively. What are your views in terms of today's role of the LEAs in an authority like Birmingham? Has the role been diminished too much? Does it need to change further?

*(Professor Wragg)* With all these things, it is a question of what you can do within the brief that you have. I am always reminded of the story of Len Shackleton and Arthur Ellis, the international referee. Len Shackleton was a bit of a wag and on one very muddy day he had a free kick with a very muddy ball and he built a pile of mud and put the ball on it. Arthur Ellis, the international referee, went over and kicked the pile of mud away and put the ball on the floor. Shackleton did the same thing again and he kicked it away again. Shackleton said, "It does not say in the rules that I cannot make a pile of mud and put a ball on it." Arthur Ellis said, "No, but it does not say that you can." I am with Shackleton on this. You are quite right that the role of the LEA has been diminished considerably but that does not mean to say that if an LEA is determined and imaginative and positive it cannot achieve a tremendous amount. After all, look what they have to do. What have they lost? They have lost things like being a monopoly supplier, which they probably should never have been in the first place. Yes, they have lost a number of powers but the ones they now have are tremendously important assignments that society is giving them. An authority like Birmingham has pushed it as far as it can without alienating schools. Back in 1993, one of the big complaints from schools was that local politicians had not adjusted to the new relationship. They thought they could still tell schools what to do and things have changed. What Birmingham politicians did do much better thereafter was they forged a much better partnership where they

recognised that their diminished role was still very important. That is what all local authorities should do. They should make an absolute meal of what they have.

19. You mentioned too much national prescription in the classroom. There have been enormous changes since you wrote the report. One of the main problems in the classroom is the gap that there has always been and always will be between the actual curriculum and the intended curriculum. Has that gap closed between the actual curriculum and the intended curriculum over the past nine years or is that still a very big problem area that education has?

*(Professor Wragg)* Morris Galtou was a professor at Leicester for many years and did a very well known research project, some 25 years ago now called the Oracle Project, where he went round primary schools to see what people were doing. His report was referred to for many years afterwards. He recently went back again to the same schools. In some cases, he found exactly the same practice as 25 years ago. In one case, he said the teacher filed the children into the classroom in exactly the same way. The only difference he could see was that when somebody got a sum wrong, whereas 25 years ago she used to say, "That is so easy my five year old son could have got it right", now she says, "My five year old grandson could have got it right." Some people have managed to ride the changes. Yes, there have been quite a few changes. In terms of the national curriculum what has been the best success is the entitlement side of it. In this city, for example, even at the time when we did the 1993 report, there was a former girls' school that had no decent technology facilities because it had not been a boys' school doing woodwork and metalwork. It still had not been put right in 1993. You could find some cases but you would be hard put to find any fundamental omissions. Now, it does not matter whether you are rich or poor, male or female. You will do science. That kind of thing has been a real gain. In terms of teaching strategies, I have spent 30-odd years researching primary and secondary classrooms both here and abroad. The thing about teaching is that people do not realise how incredibly busy teaching is. On average, teachers will engage in something like 1,000 exchanges in one day. That is 200,000 a year, a million in five years. Then someone comes along and says, "Change it." You cannot do it by edict. If people have rehearsed, repeated, favoured strategies that suit their personality and the age group they are teaching, the subject they are teaching or whatever, you cannot suddenly say, "Unscramble." It is like saying to a professional golfer, "Shift your swing a couple of millimetres to the right." If you say, "Have people really changed?" sometimes I think we have what Barry McDonald called innovation without change. There may well be a new curriculum but the style of teaching is the same as it was before. This happens, for example, when discovery type science programmes have been introduced. Those teachers who are faithful to the spirit of it will say, "Do this experiment. Now let's compare your finding. Now let's look in the textbook and we find you have just demonstrated a law which has been established for two centuries and is in your textbook." Somebody else will go in and will not do the experiment but will dictate the answers because

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**[Jeff Ennis Cont]**

that is what they want to do. It is very hard for people to make real, significant changes to their basic teaching strategies. The second important finding in international studies is that teachers have very little time to make a decision. I ask my new students every year how long they think they are going to have to make a routine classroom decision. Often, they will say, "Five or ten seconds" or, "20 seconds" or something like that. One year someone said half an hour, which was rather nice. I could get back to the staff room, read a book and come back, but five or ten seconds is an eternity in classroom time. If I ask somebody something or if something happens or somebody asks me a question and I wait, what are you waiting for? Life goes on. Because they make decisions very quickly, they lay down, as we all do, deep structures that are very much part of the way we are. When I analyse lessons and I found a teacher teaching about insects, he said, "Why is a camel not an insect?" Someone says, "It does not collect pollen." He says, "Humming birds collect pollen." Then someone says, "They have no wings" and he says, "Eagles have wings." It goes on like this and you can see that that man, in less than one second, is deciding every day to challenge children intellectually because that is the way he teaches. If someone comes along and says, "Change that" when he has laid down these patterns and he is having to think so fast, it is going to be very hard. Yes, there are changes but what Birmingham has managed to do is to allow people to have a more sporting chance. It is still not perfect but people will think critically about what they do and possibly change it.

**Chairman**

20. I want to get you onto the diversity front, Professor. You have said how important imagination is and letting imagination flower. You have also said you visited a specialist school for languages and you were very impressed by some aspects of it. What is your feeling in terms of what this current fashion for diversity is for specialist schools and foundation schools and city academies? Start with specialist schools. Many of us have been to specialist schools and been impressed not only by the buzz it gives the schools generally but also the achievements in that particular specialty. What is your feeling about specialist schools and diversity as applied to Birmingham?

(*Professor Wragg*) I am in favour of them. I wrote a report for David Blunkett before the 1997 election because I was looking at some specialist schools in other countries. One school in Austria had been a specialist sports school for 25 years. It is not new in some countries. I was in favour of it with some provisos. I did a radio series and I went to quite a few specialist schools and I thought pretty well all of them were very impressive places. That is partly because they are not typical. In the first wave or two of specialist schools you would expect to have perhaps teachers who have bright ideas, energy and are proud of what they are doing, so they are not the same as the others. Whether that means that every single school becoming a specialist school would automatically do the same thing I do not think one can say. I am not in favour of schools being asked to

raise money as a pot, like a poker game: here's our £50,000; we will see your 50 and raise you 50. I went to one school that raised £50,000 from one sponsor. I went to another school that raised it from umpteen donations from £50 to £500 and I have been to schools where they gave up when they got about £4,000 or £5,000 because in a poor area they are very unsexy from a business point of view. I do not think that should matter. It seems to me like Robin Hood in reverse to give most to those who have it. The other point I would make is that there are many ways of becoming diverse. I have never believed that there was a bog standard school because I have never seen two schools the same. I have been to schools that in theory have the same number of free school meals or whatever. They are totally different from each other. The teachers are different; the children are different; their families are different; the history is different. I think there is a fair amount of diversity already. I do not mind diversity. I think it is a very refreshing thing.

**Mr Pollard**

21. Have you considered the Steiner model as being part of that diversity? They are trying very hard to become part of mainstream schools and get recognised by the Secretary of State and get funding.

(*Professor Wragg*) The sad thing was that at one time it looked as if Ofsted might crush diversity because some of the schools that were different might have come off badly. I am glad that common sense prevailed in the end but Montessori type schools, Steiner type schools—I would not say the more the merrier, but the thing about education is the lifeblood of education is those who are willing to innovate and have a go at something. For me, diversity has to come within the school, not just between schools. It may be that if you have a secondary school where the science teachers are trying out something and they are pretty excited about it; meanwhile, the maths teachers are trying something quite different that they are pretty keen on, that kind of diversity is just as important as that school being different from the one down the road. In a sense, the Steiner school, because they put a premium on imagination, the least they could do is improvise themselves.

22. You mentioned a ten per cent gap between boys and girls and that had grown and is likely to carry on growing. What ought we to do about that?

(*Professor Wragg*) It is not just a GCSE problem. If you look at the whole story right the way through, three to five year old boys in nursery schools specialise in formula one noises. Meanwhile, three to five year old girls are discussing Wittgenstein. Well, they are not. Girls talk to each other and get encouraged to talk. Boys make sound effects and probably get told off for being a bit too boisterous and yet boys love talking about their fantasy play. I have interviewed loads of three to five year olds and asked them about their games. They talk quite happily but they tend not to be encouraged to talk so much. In primary schools we found that things like, for example, fathers, grandfathers, uncles, elder brothers, other male parts of a family reading with children, particularly with boys, was very helpful. We

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PROFESSOR TED WRAGG

[Continued

**[Mr Pollard Cont]**

found also teachers trying to relate children's reading to their interests. I interviewed one boy who said he hated reading. The only thing he read was his Liverpool Football Club comic. At the end of the year, he said he loved reading. A nine year old boy, by the time he is ten, loves reading. Why? Because his teacher gave him adventure books, sport books and humour books, which he loves. That particular boy benefited from having something tailored to his interests. Going to secondary schools, by then you have 50 per cent or so of boys getting GCSE in English and 68 per cent of girls. There is a huge difference there. Five GCSEs; it is now 55/56; 45/46. Back in 1984, it was 27.1 and 26.2, 0.9 difference between them. I do not go along with the idea that boys do not have the course work gene. Back in the 1970s, people used to say that girls just wanted to leave school. They are airheads. They all want to be secretaries, get out and get a family. It was absolute rubbish and fortunately people put on programmes like Girls into Science and Technology, Women into Science and Engineering. Girls were encouraged to use their brains and that worked. Now we say that boys are incapable of course work. They just want to kick around with their mates. Right through from pre-school, through secondary, I think there are lots of things that need doing. Each of them might help two or three per cent but as a cluster of things between them they could make a real impact. This may not be the single biggest problem facing us but it is certainly one of the biggest.

**Jonathan Shaw**

23. How should Birmingham respond to pressure on faith schools?

(*Professor Wragg*) It is a very important issue in Birmingham. It is very hard to know now because Northern Ireland is complicated. I have just done a 40 minute BBC Northern Ireland programme on integrated schools. I had not been to Northern Ireland for a bit and I was quite shocked by some of the things I saw when I was there. In the integrated schools in Northern Ireland there are five per cent of children and yet 85 per cent of people in opinion polls say they want more integrated education. After what happened at Holy Cross School, I think that was a setback for faith schools. There was quite a strong belief that there was nothing wrong with having, say, Moslem schools and so on. I want to be sympathetic to that but I went to the Holy Cross area. I did not see the actual event but I saw where it happened and it tore me to pieces to think that that could happen. I interviewed people who said things like, "I never met a Catholic when I was a child." You are just forced to think again. I am quite confused about faith schools at the moment.

24. You were well disposed to them prior to going to Northern Ireland?

(*Professor Wragg*) I could not find an argument, if someone said that you have a Catholic school and Protestant school, why can you not have a Moslem school.

25. Would an argument be we would not start here?

(*Professor Wragg*) But we did and that is the irrefutable bit of the argument. I would now feel uneasy if schools simply carried on segregating because Lord Londonderry, who was the first Minister for Education in Northern Ireland, did not want separate schools. He did not want segregated schools. He said, "This is storing trouble" and he was right. It did. It was the Catholic and Protestant churches that wanted it and got it. Now it is very hard to change it.

**Chairman**

26. I went to an early excellence centre which Professor Chris Pascal runs here in Birmingham. I was most impressed by the way that is innovative and a tremendous group of people, working across the disciplines, working across so many facets of early years and across education, health and social services. There is a bit of a conundrum in Birmingham. Here we are, celebrating coming here because what an interesting education authority this is, but it is cheek by jowl with a social services department with an appalling reputation. This has been emphasised by some of the evidence we have heard today. Usually, local authorities, if they are good, are good across the piece. What is the explanation?

(*Professor Wragg*) It is the history again. These things have evolved sometimes around personalities, sometimes around ways of working, sometimes with a strong sense of territory. Although everybody's buzz words nowadays are interprofessional partnerships and so on, in reality it is not as easy as people think. It came out in the Exeter Education Commission. The police, for example, have a very strong tradition in Devon and Cornwall of community policing so you would think there was a natural fit with schools and yet the police find it frustrating because in some secondary schools they have a clearly named person that they liaise with, the deputy head or whoever. In other schools, they have absolutely no idea and nor has the school. At that time, when we looked at it, they had 17 clusters of primary schools but they had a north, central and south health region for the city. If one grows up that side and does rather well and the other does less well, it does not seem easy to integrate them to share best practice because of their separate histories.

27. Your commission seems to have achieved a great deal. How many places do you think have copied the commission idea? I know you are doing it in Exeter but would you recommend it for a large number of education authorities? Indeed, you might recommend it for social services here in Birmingham.

(*Professor Wragg*) I think it is a very healthy process but it is only a kick start. The awful thing would be if there is a report that gets put in a drawer, which is what can happen. People feel the report was the Act itself and you have done it. I would want to disarm completely what we did in the commission. Okay, we had a good time. We talked to lots of people, we produced a report and lots of recommendations but frankly, if the politicians and the officers had ignored it, it would have been a waste of time. What has happened in Birmingham happened because of the work of people like Tim

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PROFESSOR TED WRAGG

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**[Chairman Cont]**

Brighouse and the political leaders who got behind it and the key people in schools, the heads and teachers. Without them, it is totally lost. A commission is a good idea provided someone sees it as being serious and a blueprint, not just a cosmetic exercise. Do not waste anybody's time if it is that.

28. That is a very good note on which to end. I was very pleased when I read your material on the commission modelled on the select committee. What you have ended on is exactly what this Committee believes. It is all right having a good investigation and doing a good report but if you cannot sell it to government departments or to anyone else and it does not make anything happen, you add no value and you might as well not have done it. We can agree on that.

*(Professor Wragg)* Thank you and the best of luck with it because, having seen a select committee from the inside I think it is an extremely important part of our democracy. Do not be put off when the DfES gives you a list of 25 reasons why none of these things can be done. When we did our report, we recommended day release for all and we felt very strongly about it. At that time, the DES as it was said, "No, it would be far too expensive." Then along came things like high unemployment and youth training schemes so then the will and the money were found. Much power to your elbow.

Chairman: Thank you.

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TUESDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2002

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Members present:

Mr Barry Sheerman, in the Chair

Mr David Chaytor  
Valerie Davey  
Jeff Ennis  
Paul Holmes

Ms Meg Munn  
Mr Kerry Pollard  
Jonathan Shaw

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#### **Memorandum from Birmingham Partnership for Change (EB04)**

Birmingham Partnership for Change is a strategic organisation. Through partnerships the organisation seeks to a) provide strategies in education and employment in response to the particular needs of the African Caribbean community in Birmingham; b) develop shared agendas for change and development between the African Caribbean community and public and private sector institutions in pursuance of our mission; and change policy and practice in the education and employment of African Caribbean people in Birmingham.

The following represent some major achievements in education. However, a number of challenging issues still face the African Caribbean community in Birmingham:

- Commissioning of research: The Personal and Academic Development of Vulnerable African Caribbean Pupils (Year 11).
- Launch of Raising Expectations and Achievement in Literacy for children from African Caribbean Backgrounds (REAL)—February 2002 (Years 5/6).
- Training of African Caribbean Supplementary schools—April/May 2001.
- Facilitated the development of African Caribbean supplementary schools network—Capacity building of supplementary schools including work with the Supplementary Schools Support Service—Department for Education and Employment Pilot Project.
- Meeting with Department for Education and Skills with Black Boys Can—April 2002.
- Working with African Caribbean parents to improve their capacity to support their children.
- Graduate Professional Programme.
- Increased the number of African Caribbean governors in schools.
- Membership of LEA's Governors Recruitment Strategy Group.
- Monitoring/evaluation of provision of education to African Caribbean children—.African Caribbean Achievement Group.
- Teacher Recruitment/retention.
- The Personal and Academic Development of Vulnerable African and Caribbean Pupils (PAD).
- Organised a Conference on the Raising Standards: The Education of African and Caribbean Pupils.

Birmingham Partnership for Change  
*September 2002*

#### **Memorandum from Birmingham Race Action Partnership (EB03)**

##### INFORMATION FOR THE SELECT COMMITTEE

Birmingham Race Action Partnership is a development agency that seeks to influence the mainstream practice of institutions through research, consultation, lobbying and by providing strategic and policy guidance. A background paper explaining the origins of b:RAP and how we deliver our agenda is attached to this message.

In the area of education, b:RAP has three core strategies that directly relate to developing education provision in Birmingham and addressing issues of inequality. These are described in more detail in the attached table. However, Birmingham Race Action Partnership also deliver on a number of thematic areas of work across the city, including Health, Culture, Black Voluntary Sector Development, Neighbourhood Renewal, Criminal Justice, Housing and Organisational Development.

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## EVIDENCE WE WOULD LIKE TO PRESENT TO THE COMMITTEE

Our topics for discussion with the committee members are derived through our experiences of addressing race equality issues in Birmingham, and more specifically relate to a recent report Commissioned by b:RAP and other partners, and conducted by Professor David Gillborn and Dr Simon Warren from the Institute of Education, London. The report was commissioned by b:RAP to provide an analytical and community driven perspective of the education provision as it applies to BME communities in Birmingham. b:RAP works in areas that require innovation and experimentation to address “traditional” or systemic issues. The report, in our view provides a detailed analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of a high achieving education authority, in the area of race equality. We are grateful to the LEA, and Tim Brighouse in particular, for not being satisfied with a glowing OFSTED report, and for being prepared to highlight areas of non-achievement.

## ISSUES OF CONCERN:

- Patterns of attainment by ethnicity and gender.
- Which type of interventions appear to work when addressing race equality.
- The “tensions” between national and local policy.
  - The quality of management of race equality across a complex school system.
  - The degree of influence and joined up working that is “lost” to the system.
  - Students voices.
  - Policy into practice.

## EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Rationale</i>	<i>Aims</i>	<i>What's been accomplished?</i>
Community Involvement	The involvement of BME communities in both the development and delivery of mainstream services as a mechanism to enhance and improve provision.	1. Developing “Community Advocates”— individuals who can be utilised as a resource by individuals at strategic/ policy-making level.  2. Understanding the needs of BME learners using this information to inform service delivery.	1. A cohort of 12 Community Advocates have been trained.  2. A Black Learners Network has been developed and will have a strategic influence in planning provision in collaboration with the LSC and BLLP.
Service Delivery	Service Delivery has to have a direct and informed relationship to addressing both learner needs and economic needs of BME communities.	1. Provider Network to develop a direct relationship with community involvement strategies in order to build on and develop delivery.  2. Support LSC contractual role and responsibility for legislative responsibilities eg RRAA2000.	1. Provider Network is in its early stages of development.  2. Working with LSC and others to implement “IMPACT MEASURES” which will highlight and monitor equality gaps.
Research	To develop a community driven perspective on the accomplishments of equality initiatives in Pre-16 Education.	1. Develop analytical information that can inform policy development.	1. Research has been produced.  2. Launch and implementation strategy to be developed.

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### Examination of Witnesses

Ms SANDRA OLIVER, Education Officer, Birmingham Partnership for Change, and Ms JOY WARMINGTON, Director, Birmingham Race Action Partnership, were examined.

#### Chairman

29. Can I welcome Sandra Oliver and Joy Warmington to our deliberations? We are very grateful not only for the help and cooperation we are having from everyone we meet in Birmingham, particularly from the education sector, but we are now into our second day. We visited between us four schools today and we will be on the road again in the morning. We particularly are interested not just in Birmingham but we want to look at education in one big, vibrant, changing city. Birmingham also has this record of improvement and meeting many of the challenges and we want to learn the lessons, but also the background is we are conducting all this year an investigation into secondary education. We will be looking at four topics: diversity, whether the government hopes are pinned on the fact that diversity, specialist schools, foundation schools, city academies and much else, will drive up the standards in the way they expect. Then we will be moving on to recruitment and retention of teachers. We will be looking at pupil achievement, particularly at those pupils who do not achieve their full potential and looking at some of the myths and stereotypes of white working class boys, the real problems in schools in under-achievement. Is it African Caribbean young men? Is it young women from particular sections of the Asian community? There are a lot of myths around and our job is to look at the hard facts to see what is the reality. Fourthly, a subject I am sure the government is less happy about, is school admissions. I hope that sets the context for our inquiry. This is formal and on the record but please relax. We have asked you to be here because you are extremely knowledgeable. Can you start by giving thumb nail sketch, a kind of overview, of how you see Birmingham education in respect of the work that you do?

(*Ms Oliver*) In terms of the city, I think that Tim Brighouse in particular has been cooperative and sensitive to the work that Birmingham Partnership for Change is doing. There are challenges presented to us around achievement, particularly of African Caribbean boys, and girls are also affected by under-achievement. I also feel that we have an important role to play as a strategic organisation in Birmingham working alongside the Education Department and school advisers. We ought to be recognised as an important organisation in Birmingham. At times, we may not be taken as seriously as we would like to be. I am concerned about the lack of black teachers, African Caribbean teachers, because we are an African Caribbean organisation working in Birmingham. I am also concerned about the recruitment around governors in schools. I am concerned about the African Caribbean supplementary schools and lack of support that there is currently.

(*Ms Warmington*) Birmingham has some unique challenges. The demographics alone present significant challenges to the city in terms of patterns of achievement and attainment of pupils. What we

are looking at over the next ten years is a significant growth in the Bangladeshi population but they are one of the lowest achieving groups in Birmingham, especially Bangladeshi boys. Where we are getting improvement in terms of girls, we are seeing some retrograde steps in terms of certain particular ethnic groups in Birmingham. Overall, it creates a very dissatisfied feeling about the state of education, especially when you get to secondary school education. Having worked in a previous life looking at parents and partnership work, I have worked in about 50 schools in Birmingham over four years or so, delivering a programme called School Wise which was designed to help parents understand the national curriculum and support their children in terms of their education. At primary school level, there are obviously lots of opportunities for participation and opportunities for real partnership working. That is borne out in terms of the achievement but when you get to secondary schools you get the same in lots of other big cities, where parents are at a loss as to where to direct their child to. Can you be confident that if you send your child to X or Y school they are going to get a good outcome at the end of the day? That is where you see the mirroring patterns of deprivation and school achievement in Birmingham being borne out. It is a very mixed city. We have some very high achieving schools and we also have schools that, although making progress, are not making progress quick enough in terms of the needs and aspirations in the communities that they predominantly serve.

30. We were impressed by the percentage of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, 43 per cent in Birmingham. This morning, the Committee split up and half of us went to the Moslem faith school in Sparkbrook. The message I took away was that the head teacher there, who I thought was a very inspiring head, said that very often what parents want is for their child not to be looked at as a Moslem but as an individual. I thought that was one of the most profound things that we were told this morning. Do you think that there is a problem, that many kinds from ethnic minority backgrounds find their ethnicity comes first rather than their individuality?

(*Ms Warmington*) Yes. The organisation I represent has done a small scale survey called Beyond Racial Identity of 17 to 30 year olds in Birmingham. We deliberately wanted to look at the views of that particular group of people. We looked at African Caribbean communities, people from mixed communities, Vietnamese, Irish and there were some extremely diversely mixed communities. One of the things that came out quite strongly was that they constantly felt that ethnicity was more of a problem for other people than it was for them and that they were being defined within their ethnic boundaries and the packaging, whatever that may be, that went with it. It is certainly something that has come across from our research but we do tend to operate to reinforce those boundaries.

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MS SANDRA OLIVER AND MS JOY WARMINGTON

[Continued

**[Chairman Cont]**

(*Ms Oliver*) Pupils have expressed recently at a meeting I attended that they are treated differently. Teachers do not care for them is what I was hearing, and they are concerned and want to be treated as individuals rather than as black children in a school. I think that is very important. They recognise themselves as being black in a white society. They want to be individuals within a society rather than being black children in that society.

**Jeff Ennis**

31. I wonder if you could say a few words about the differing roles of the two different agencies you represent and what is the overlap, if any, between the two agencies?

(*Ms Oliver*) Birmingham Partnership for Change is a strategic organisation in Birmingham. It was established in 1995 after a piece of research by the then TEC, currently the Learning and Skills Council, looking at the issues around employment and education for African Caribbean people and the reasons why they were disadvantaged in the education and employment arenas. It is still a strategic organisation. It is currently working alongside the local education authority. It works with the community, with faith groups and with the DfES and various agencies.

32. The LSC?

(*Ms Oliver*) Yes. We are still working in partnership with a lot of other agencies. Joy and I work in partnership and we have collaborated on a report.

33. What about your organisation, Joy?

(*Ms Warmington*) Birmingham Race Action Partnership is I suppose the equivalent of a race equality development agency for Birmingham. We focus primarily on race and racism and how it manifests itself within some of the key institutions of Birmingham. We work with the institutions to try to put together practical interventions that can help to bring about mainstream change. We have been established since 1999 so we are a relatively new organisation but what you will know about the Race Relations Amendment Act is that it talks about mainstream. That is where the change has to be. In 1999, when Birmingham Race Action Partnership was developed, it was also talking about mainstream and saying that in order to really bring about some lasting changes in intervention we need to look at how we can work with key institutions to get them to change their policies and practices within the mainstream. We do not just work in education. Education is one of our themes, if you like. We have a joined up strategy around race equality so we work in health, looking at issues of health and equality. We connect with the four primary care trusts as well as some of the acute trusts. We work with the ISC on their strategies around some very innovative ideas about how they try to address some of the systemic disadvantage of being in the communities. The partnership is made up of some of the institutions that also are concerned about delivery. We are funded and supported by them to challenge them.

We are not owned by any one partner. We do not get embroiled in the politics of having to bow to the master or the person funding us.

34. Do you have an action team for jobs policy in the employment service in Birmingham?

(*Ms Warmington*) We work quite closely with Job Centre Plus. Job Centre Plus are one of the organisations we are working with strategically—so that they can make their services relevant to communities. We are looking primarily at how institutions interpret what they do and how they tackle that; because unless you can get that right you can consult all the communities and you can listen to them and commission research or whatever, but it is the responsiveness that counts. That is where the intervention is needed and that is where we try to make that change. In terms of the work that we do with Birmingham Partnership for Change, I know you will be hearing from David later on, we commissioned him to examine the LEA policies with regard to race equality and education in Birmingham. We work with Birmingham Partnership for Change, because of their specialism around African Caribbean communities. We work across communities, not just with one ethnic group.

**Mr Pollard**

35. I am curious as to why you chose the African Caribbean community. In my area, Bangladeshis are the lowest. Whatever marker you put up—housing, jobs, achievement at school or whatever—the Bangladeshis come out worst and that seems to be the national statistic as well. You seem to have focused on African Caribbeans. Was there a particular reason for that?

(*Ms Oliver*) I am the one focusing on African Caribbeans.

**Chairman**

36. Yours is an African Caribbean organisation.

(*Ms Oliver*) Yes.

Mr Pollard: I do not see Bangladeshis mentioned and I am curious as to why.

Chairman: Sandra works for an African Caribbean organisation but Joy has said a moment ago that she covers the whole piece.

**Mr Pollard**

37. Bangladeshis have not been mentioned though.

(*Ms Oliver*) We work with the African Caribbean communities. I do not know whether the paperwork you have in front of you refers specifically to the African Caribbean community. That is probably my bit of paperwork. In Birmingham, the African Caribbean boys in particular are the lowest achievers, 17 per cent A\* to C grades.

38. Far lower than Bangladeshi boys?

(*Ms Oliver*) Far lower. Hence we have a need in Birmingham to address the African Caribbean community, specifically African Caribbean boys. We work with an organisation called Black Boys Can which has recently been established. I met them yesterday with another member from one of your

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MS SANDRA OLIVER AND MS JOY WARMINGTON

[Continued

**[Mr Pollard Cont]**

departments. They are working with children who could become disaffected, taking them from the streets. They are intending to keep them on target, to pull them back on task, getting them motivated, raising their self-esteem empowering them. They have four pillars, one called empowering boys, then empowering communities, working with schools and there is a fourth one which I do not recall at the moment. That organisation was started up not with funding but because people had a passion for the work. They felt there was a necessity to do something about these boys on the streets. Far too many of our boys are in prison. If you look around Birmingham you will find that some African Caribbean boys are on the street but the majority of them are in prison. It is extremely disturbing for our community; hence, there is a real need to address the issue of under-achievement among African Caribbean boys in the schools and to do it extremely early rather than leaving it until later.

39. Is there a restaurant culture still? That is what I get in my town. The boys come out and straight into a restaurant.

(*Ms Warmington*) There are some more acute issues. One of the things that you will know that has been developed from work that the Learning and Skills Council is doing is that Bangladeshi communities on the whole are lower in terms of key levels of achievement. That means that their ability to access jobs that progress them into whatever, is also diminished. When you couple that with under-achievement in schools, you have a recipe for disaster because you are not in a position to move those base lines along very much. In Birmingham, this will be an acute problem because there will be a decline in white communities of working age over the next ten years, and an increase in the Bangladeshi community and population of a working age. So there will be a significant increase in a community where their skills levels do not equip them at the moment - unless we do some serious intervention, to enable them to access the jobs that are necessary within Birmingham and its communities. These are the real tensions and challenges.

40. What sort of interventions are you thinking of? Role models and stuff like that?

(*Ms Warmington*) It needs to be far more fundamental than that. We are challenging organisations to work in partnership with organisations to be more radical in terms of how they think of solutions. Role models, peer intervention and all those sorts of things are extremely good strategies but we need to ask ourselves "what is happening at the root of this?" What is creating this outcome, time and time again? In some respects, we might know the answer, but it becomes too difficult to deal with and it becomes a challenge that passes on from report to report.

41. Is this a generational thing? Do you feel that the next generation of Bangladeshi boys in particular will be better because they have been educated in our schools and therefore their children might aspire to be better than the current ones? In my own area, it is the grey bearded men who still call the shots. They want to get the boys out to work as quickly as possible. The girls marry and the boys go out to

work. The boys and girls themselves have their own aspirations, so the next generation might be better. Perhaps the next 10 or 15 years might be easier. What is your view?

(*Ms Warmington*) In terms of the specifics of your question, we work with a lot of organisations—for instance, the Bangladeshi Youth Forum in Birmingham do a lot of work with Bangladeshi youths. They may have a better understanding of what those communities think and feel but the overarching sense of what is happening in Birmingham in particular, is that younger communities are being locked out of opportunities. That is not being shifted as time goes by; it is possibly even getting worse. We need to do something about how we can connect people up to opportunities.

**Jonathan Shaw**

42. You talk about the number of boys in prison, which is disturbing for the African Caribbean community and the lack of role models, the lack of Afro-Caribbean teachers. What has happened? Has this been a problem that has been growing? It is now something that we are talking about and Diane Abbott has done quite a lot of work on it within her community but what are the reasons? Educate us.

(*Ms Oliver*) Some of the reasons I hear from the children and they are saying, "Teachers do not care about us." There are low teacher expectations of pupils in schools, most definitely, I think perhaps around an understanding of the children's culture—where are they coming from?—and an understanding of their social, economic backgrounds in Birmingham. Have they been at home with mum and dad? Have they had a difficult period at home with an argument that they come into school with, to be told, "Sit down. I have told you to do that"? They are carrying quite a lot of baggage with them in schools and I think also it is the lack of support for African Caribbean parents, raising their awareness of the education system; schools opening their doors to parents in order to be able to access schools in order to support their children.

43. In terms of opening the doors, you need to do a little more. You will not find a head teacher in the city who will say, "I cannot see parents. I am too busy." All of them will say, "Of course I see parents", but I suppose it is how you do that. Are there models? Have you seen examples of where this has worked, or is it across the board. It is pretty damning, what you are saying, is it not?

(*Ms Oliver*) There are schools within Birmingham that are helpful. We have worked with a number of schools around the personal academic development of African Caribbean pupils. That was a year 11 programme that we undertook with four secondary schools in Birmingham. The schools that gained the most from the programme were those who were more open, more ready to work with the researchers and the pupils etc., and those coming in. It is difficult to assess at the moment but I think parents are extremely concerned that they do not have access to the schools.

44. Is this a problem that has grown? Is it family breakdown? Is it economic issues?

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[Continued

**[Jonathan Shaw Cont]**

(*Ms Oliver*) I think there are a number of issues. In some schools, you may find, for instance, in the Atwood Green area, schools with a lot of single parents with young children, perhaps without fathers. There would be issues around how do we support mum; how do we support the children when they come into schools, but you could say that is probably common to all communities because there are single parents in all communities.

45. Some of the problems you have described are not unique just for the Afro-Caribbean communities. What is it that leads to such under-achievement? What is so unique, because all the sets of circumstances are ones that we could all talk about for any particular disadvantaged group. What is special in this instance and causes us most concern about the African-Caribbean community?

(*Ms Oliver*) One of the issues that I am most concerned about is school exclusion, the exclusion of African Caribbean pupils. They are five or six times more likely to be excluded than their white counterparts in schools.

**Chairman**

46. In Birmingham?

(*Ms Oliver*) It may be the national picture but I am also very concerned about the unofficial exclusions: go into the corner. They are not learning when they are turning away from the teacher. Go downstairs to the head teacher; go out of the classroom and stand outside. How many of those have gone on with schools that parents do not know about and that are not recorded? For how long? This would have an impact on the educational attainment of African Caribbean children.

**Jonathan Shaw**

47. What you are saying is teachers' ability to be able to manage some of the behaviour exhibited or to understand and therefore some of the behaviour that is exhibited by African-Caribbean boys, in particular. Is that right?

(*Ms Oliver*) I think it is understanding the child. One child said, "We might sound loud but that is not being rude."

48. That is understanding different cultures etc. In terms of the number of African-Caribbean teachers, are there many?

(*Ms Oliver*) There are not many in Birmingham schools and I have spoken to a number of teachers who have left the profession because they feel that they are not being treated equally in the schools. They also feel they are being overlooked in terms of promotion. They do not feel they are able to manage within the system because of issues around racism.

49. Although teacher recruitment and retention are on your list of bullet points, has there been any attempt to grow your own, taking a group of young, black, African Caribbean students in terms of the city saying, "Go off to university and we will support you and try to inspire you to become teachers and return to your area"?

(*Ms Oliver*) We have not done any work in that area. We have encouraged the community to train as teachers and we have encouraged mature students to become teachers, to leave their professions perhaps and turn to teaching. We have not been successful.

50. How important do you think that is in terms of resolving some of the problems?

(*Ms Oliver*) I think it is extremely important, incredibly important, to have role models.

51. Where would you put it if there was a list from one to ten?

(*Ms Oliver*) That is extremely difficult. I think, in terms of male role models within schools, that is a priority, black teachers who can support the school, the community and the children. It is vital.

**Ms Munn**

52. I want to talk about composition of schools because we have been told that 43 per cent of children within Birmingham schools are from minority ethnic communities. I just have the statistics for the secondary sector. Although it is obviously not true for all schools there seem to be significant numbers of schools where either there is a predominance of black pupils or a predominance of white pupils. My group that I was with this morning went to two schools which had a significant majority of whites with hardly any black pupils. Tomorrow, the one we are going to is predominantly black with very few white pupils. Is that a problem for Birmingham, that that kind of pattern has emerged? Does it impact on some of the issues that we have been talking about in terms of attainment and attitudes to pupils and teacher recruitment?

(*Ms Warmington*) I think it is a trend for Birmingham. Birmingham is very segregated. 70 per cent of the black ethnic minority population live within the nine most deprived wards in the city. They tend to be in the inner cities. What you are looking at is a pattern where, within the inner cities, there are quite a lot of ethnic minorities and as you go out to the suburbs it gets fewer and fewer. It is worrying, but what your other colleague was alluding to, which I wanted to comment on, was the ethnicisation of the problem. I do not think issues that you are talking about are solely found within these groups. One of the things that we debated when I was in education was some of the issues around working class communities in the outskirts of Birmingham White working class communities that were experiencing some of the same sorts of problems in terms of deprivation, attainment and expectations; and how these are realised through their children and the kinds of lives that they have. The danger is, that it is hard to deal with particular issues in communities without labelling those communities, but there is an even greater danger to say that these traits are common only within particular communities and therefore typecasting the strategy. I think there is an opportunity to look at some of these factors and examine how they appear across communities and how they can be dealt with more generically. In doing that, it would help not to reinforce strategies that, by the nature of the way they are devised, ethnicise communities again; I do not think we can carry on

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[Continued

**[Ms Munn Cont]**

like this for much longer. We have a figure here which refers to mixed race children and the increase of mixed race exclusions. How can you explain that in terms of African Caribbeanism or in terms of Asian or Indian people? Ethnicity alone is not an explanation for some of these complexities. Possibly the way to deal with it is to think about how is the system perpetuating low expectations of students; how are teaching strategies being employed to disadvantage groups of students, because that seems to be what is happening. It cannot simply be explained in terms of particular groups and categories of people, not when it also happens to white working class boys.

53. What Joy is explaining is that it is where the populations live and the segregation in living which is creating the segregation in schools as well. Are there other problems and issues that arise from that?

(*Ms Oliver*) Joy has covered most of the issues I would be discussing. I agree with you. In the Atwood Green area, for instance, and the Ladywood and Aston areas the majority are probably African Caribbean and mixed race heritage families. At the moment, we have quite a number of interrelated issues, economic, social and all sorts to deal with.

54. Taking the general issue of raising attainment generally within schools, there seems to be evidence around that some of the strategies which are coming through the government and some of the things being done around literacy and numeracy are having some effect in raising attainment. Are you satisfied that that is happening equally across schools within Birmingham or do you think there are other things which the government should be looking at in terms of raising attainment generally?

(*Ms Oliver*) I do not think it is happening equally across schools. In terms of African Caribbean community, David Gillborn has said in some research that he conducted that African Caribbean children start compulsory schooling above all other children. By the age of key stage two they start to drop off and by 16 they have fallen off totally, so they are coming out with nothing. There must be other factors. I know this new key stage three strategy has just come in place, a bit late for some of our children, I am afraid. The earlier literacy and numeracy strategies have supported some children but it has also gone along with parental support. It is those parents who are aware of the system who will support their children in terms of homework, in terms of follow-up, going to parents' events. If there are exclusions, they will challenge them. It is those children who will get the best out of the system, but single parents who are on low income, for instance, working all hours, who have three children—where do they find time to get to a parents' evening and challenge exclusions? It is difficult.

#### Chairman

55. Is it all gloom and doom in Birmingham or are there exemplars? Are there schools where you say, "Wow, they are different. They understand the problem. They work at preschool and reach down to the catchment at primary." Are there schools that are head and shoulders above others and you could say

if only all schools were like that, or perhaps there are examples elsewhere in the country, in London. I do not know. Do you know of experience in this? You praised Tim Brighouse and you have said there are some interesting things happening in Birmingham and there is a raising of standards, but are there any institutions? This morning at the faith school we visited, there were wonderful results; a very poor community; a large percentage of single parent families but fantastic results. This is from five to eleven, but can you flag up to us really good practice in Birmingham or elsewhere that we could look at and emulate?

(*Ms Warmington*) I honestly cannot, not because there are not any but because we do not have that kind of linkage. It depends on what you think the problem or the issue is in terms of the understanding of good practice, because there are lots of things that are signposted as making a difference. The issue is whether or not you feel it is enough of a difference and whether there are other things to tackle. My sense is that you are trying to unpack some of this to see whether there are some other issues that need to be addressed within the system. What we have not talked about in great depth is how some of the teaching and national strategies disadvantage some groups and appear not to be working to the benefit of particular ethnic minority communities. When you look year on year, you can see some groups achieving and some not. What we are not looking at is differential teaching activities and strategies in terms of race and racism within the city. That, to me, would be a way of ensuring that some of those strategies are more harmonious and addressed very comprehensively, rather than having initiatives that may support the system. There is something fundamental we need to do in terms of our education system.

#### Valerie Davey

56. Whereas deprived communities do have quite a lot in common—and you emphasised that—I had always assumed until recently that the parental support was generally there. My dismay over recent years is in having found the lack of parental support in white, working class communities. There has been a complete disenchantment in some white communities certainly. I have not in the Bristol area experienced that same disenchantment amongst ethnic minority parents, all of whom still have, in my experience, generally, a commitment to education. Is that the experience here or have I completely misunderstood? What is the parental commitment concern or are you saying it simply is something that work does not allow because commitment to work does not allow what is still intrinsically support?

(*Ms Warmington*) The research that we did with Professor Gillborn was with some focus groups with parents in Birmingham. I do not pretend that they are representative views of all parents in Birmingham, but it did show that there was a high investment by parents in trying to support their children where they could, but they did not feel that there was the acceptance and willingness of the education service—schools in particular—to meet them half-way. In terms of parental strategies,

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[Continued

**[Valerie Davey Cont]**

having worked on parental involvement strategies until quite recently, one of the things that is not clear is how this work is to be accomplished. Quite often, there is not the money or the joined up funding to enable you to do work with parents that then helps you to meet directly the needs of community groups. What you try to do is juggle different types of criteria to enable you to run a parent class on an issue or to put something on. What I experienced, especially in the Shard End & Kitts Green area in Birmingham, is that the education system was failing parents, the majority of white parents in particular, and it was in danger of failing their children for the second time round. There was this feeling that the education system was not going to deliver the results because it had not come up with the results for those parents concerned.

(*Ms Oliver*) I feel parents are committed, but some parents we have spoken to are not aware of what is happening. Lack of awareness will prevent them supporting their children in schools but there are those parents who have young children, who are not aware, but they are torn between the support they give to stay looking after young children at home and going to a parents' evening. They need to understand the importance of attending parents' evenings, the importance of feedback from teachers, the importance of looking at their children's homework diaries and general training is vital. The city is looking at keeping up with the children, workshops and other things, but how many parents in Birmingham know about keeping up with the children? The BPC, as the strategic organisation, will disseminate information to supplementary schools who will then disseminate information to parents but it will take funding for them to organise classes. I know there is some funding available for keeping up with the children and inspire workshops but when it comes to the immediacy of the problem it takes some time for them to access that money. By the end of a period of, say, four months when they have organised everything, it is often too late for some children. It is very important that funding is also put in place to support training and development of parents to build their capacity to support their children.

57. We are really talking about communications, are we not? We are talking about communication at many different levels. We have not touched on language which is a special interest of mine. The importance of understanding not just the language but the circumstances you are talking about in which both the parents find themselves and education has now moved on. I think we have to find some breakthrough. The only way I can suggest which would be most effective a couple of years ago in my area would be pirate radio. I have a community that listens to pirate radio and I was told, "If you want people there tomorrow night, you had better get on pirate radio." Radio is in this particular community the way to get the message over. If you did have some money or the opportunity to tell Birmingham, "This is what you have got to do to engage parents", what would you both suggest?

(*Ms Oliver*) I would suggest initially working with large organisations such as the faith based churches, supplementary schools that we currently work with.

They are able to access a large majority of people. I would use the radio but we did a recruitment campaign for African Caribbean governors in Birmingham using the radio and we found it was not as effective at all. We found that word of mouth was the most effective way of communicating with people, especially in the African Caribbean community. You tell someone, perhaps if you are walking through the Birmingham market, for instance; you mention it to someone and they will go and say, "So-and-so is recruiting for African Caribbean governors. Would you like to turn up at the Council House at such and such a date because we are having a meeting?" Word of mouth is vital within a community. You can also use radio in conjunction with that but I do not feel it is as effective and it depends on the audience you are targeting.

(*Ms Warmington*) I have forgotten the question.

58. If you could influence the city to spend some money or to do something, what would you say in terms of engaging parents?

(*Ms Warmington*) It would not be just one strategy. There is a need to look at outreach because some communities, especially younger people having children, are very isolated. Some of the schools that I have worked in have some real problems with parenting and approaches to parenting, especially for younger members of the community. You can advertise and do radio and all the rest of it, but that would not work in particular sections of the community. I think there is something to be said for getting small groups of people together. We took parents through the literacy hour so that they understood it. We did the same with numeracy. We talk to parents around tiering in terms of GCSE. Some of the strategies that are employed by schools, parents do not understand. I have had parents come up to me and say, "I think my child has an opportunity to achieve an A or a B", but they have been put in for an examination where they can only achieve a C or something like that. There are complexities in the tiering system and parents are quite ill informed about that. I think that parents are only one piece of the puzzle, because generally the strategies that are being employed by schools are obviously around safeguarding their achievements. It is not always the parents' fault that they do not understand the way in which the system is employed.

59. You are saying that both of you and your organisations have been doing this for years and it is still only touching a minority of the ethnic minority groups? I have not got a feel from you as to whether you feel more of what you are doing would be successful or whether it has not been successful quickly enough and therefore a different strategy is needed.

(*Ms Oliver*) I do feel what I am doing is successful because parents have said, "We did not know. Now we know about it", but the barrier for us is funding. I have to think: where is the next bit of money coming from for development? Am I secure doing this job? We are not funded on a long term basis so we are doing it year by year. There is a great difficulty around funding.

(*Ms Warmington*) There is a stop/start nature. Quite a lot of things I ran in the past I tried to mainstream, but in doing so you have to meet

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mainstream criteria, which might have said something like, "In order to run a parent education course you need a minimum of 12 people." Those things may be important outputs for particular funding bodies but they are not particularly good outputs if you are wanting to try to do things that really help and support parents in understanding the education system. There is a need to look at appropriate funding sources for some of these strategies to sustain and help, but yes, I think they do help.

**Mr Chaytor**

60. I want to pursue Meg's point about segregation. From the information we have been given about schools in Birmingham there would appear to be about 11 faith schools, eight selective schools and about 25 specialist schools. Of the faith schools, all but the single Islamic school are predominantly white. Of the eight selective schools, all but Hamsworth Boys' Grammar are predominantly white. Of the 25 specialist schools, the majority are predominantly white. What do you think the impact of faith schools, specialist schools and selective schools is on interaction in Birmingham?

(*Ms Warmington*) That is a very hard question. From what I have seen in some selective schools, the pattern is changing. There are more parents who are more tuned to understanding the selective school system. I know in Allum Rock and Saltley there are many private tutors trying to gear children up from that community to pass entrance exams. People recognise selective education as a way of jumping through the hurdle. One of the issues I am unclear about is where the government stands on faith schools and selective schools. I know from the Cantle Report, one recommendation was that there should be mixed communities within a school and that having schools from one community, whether it be an Islamic, Catholic or a white community, did not work to advantage community cohesion. I think there are some issues around how the patterns, as you describe them, keep particular communities locked in, whatever those trends are, and it is worrying.

(*Ms Oliver*) African Caribbean parents aspire greatly. They want their children to gain the best from the education system and I had one mother speak to me recently, saying, "What am I going to do if my child does not get into this school? Where am I going to send her?" I was extremely worried and concerned for her. She thinks she has three years before she goes into secondary education and she is thinking that she must pass this exam to get into a selective school. She wanted me to offer her some advice as to where to send her child. It was extremely difficult. I do have issues around how faith schools, selective schools and specialist schools will impact on the community in Birmingham. Eventually, it could divide our communities in Birmingham.

61. You are a bit equivocal about that. In terms of faith schools, would you see faith schools, for example, as a way of improving the performance of Pakistani or Indian children or would you see them as a way of reinforcing the poor performance of African Caribbean and Bangladeshi children?

(*Ms Oliver*) That is a difficult question for me because I do not work with Bangladeshi children or Indian children. What I would like to see personally is the faith based African Caribbean organisations being consulted about these issues, the big churches in Birmingham, headed by various of our black bishops. I think they should be called to respond to these questions so that they are responding for their community in Birmingham and also nationally. I think you would get a better picture from them.

(*Ms Warmington*) Some parents see the faith schools as a way of improving their child's chances, especially in terms of educational achievement. The issue is bigger than that. It is what is it about a faith schools, for instance, that contributes to overall improvement in achievement and whether that could be replicated elsewhere in the system. There are lots of different types of research that talk about the fact that with religion comes improved attention to education and teaching and discipline and all that sort of stuff, and that what faith schools reap are the benefits of this. Not that I advocate more research, but what might be interesting is whether that is something that can be replicated elsewhere in the school system—for instance, in non-selective schools. It may be because you are taking a particular characteristic like the ability to pass the IQ test, putting children that pass all together, and it is this strategy that is being employed there that reaps particular benefits and outcomes? There are a number of different things here, and when you start to unpack your question it is not just an issue of whether faith schools are the way to go or not, because there are some who would say that faith schools are not the way to go and that by advocating faith schools you engender wider issues of communities not understanding each other, not belonging and feeling a sense of identity. There is some more questioning that needs to be done around those parameters, if you are going to try to get to the answer that you want.

62. If you could put yourself in the position of a Bangladeshi parent and you looked at the Birmingham school statistics and saw that there is not a single selective school that has more than one per cent of Bangladeshi pupils, what would you think?

(*Ms Warmington*) I would think it is a very sad detriment in terms of the opportunities for my child.

(*Ms Oliver*) I would be extremely concerned. If you were to go along to the grammar school in south Birmingham and you saw the children you would not know whether they were Bangladeshis or Indians or Pakistanis, but you would be quite encouraged by the fact that a large number of those children are from ethnic minority backgrounds, so that would be a hope for the future.

(*Ms Warmington*) There are some particular questions that you could be asking here such as why some communities which have been in this country longer are still experiencing deprivation and disadvantage within the system. It is not as simple as saying there is an issue about the Bangladeshi community. It is something very fundamental happening with African Caribbean communities, for

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**[Mr Chaytor Cont]**

instance, and we keep having that conversation over and over again. We still appear not to have cracked the problem.

**Chairman**

63. This is very interesting and we will be taking these issues up with David Gillborn later in the week. There are some interesting stats on all poor, minority communities. The urban white working class or African Caribbean communities have been here much longer than most Asian communities. What I thought was interesting in your response to David's question was this: essentially, he was reading through the stats and suggesting that what was happening in Birmingham was that as schools became specialist there was an increasing tendency for those schools to have fewer ethnic minority pupils which presumably means that in a core of non-specialist—what someone disgracefully once called one size fits all, bog standard comprehensives—there would be a much higher percentage of poor people. Is that what you feel has happened in Birmingham?

(*Ms Warmington*) I am looking at a school I know quite well which is a selective school and I do not see that picture. I do not have any stats on the school but I think it is quite a mixed selective school. I am not sure about the population in detail in terms of the different ethnic groups but in terms of what I visibly see it appears to be an increasingly mixed selective school. Dave has often talked and written about selection and what happens through the selection process, through streaming and some of the strategies that teachers employ. There does appear to be something inherent in terms of the things that we do that means that we shake out some groups within our society and promote opportunities for others. If you are suggesting that there is a way in which the selection process is disadvantaging members of the Bangladeshi community, I would have to say there may be something but I am not sure about it. There may be something there that is worth investigation.

(*Ms Oliver*) Bernard Coard wrote some time ago about black pupils being made educationally subnormal in British schools. The tiering of our children is a way of making them educationally subnormal because if they are all in the bottom tier the opportunity to move up is going to be less for each year of their secondary schooling. I think it is very important that schools examine carefully their strategies when tiering our children, because they can tier them for failing totally.

64. You have heard the drift of our concerns in the questions. Sometimes witnesses write to us after we have completed an oral hearing like this and say, "I wish I had said this to the Committee." Is there anything you would like to say to us that we should be exploring while we are in Birmingham or anything that you do not think you have already said?

(*Ms Oliver*) I would go back to raising the funds for the programme that we are doing in Birmingham. It is raising expectations of achievement and the literacy for children in African Caribbean backgrounds. We are doing this in collaboration with a partner in Dorset. It was very difficult raising funds

for this programme. We are working with three primary schools in Birmingham but this is also to raise the achievement of children when they get to the secondary stage of education. It is putting that intervention strategy in very early for them, starting with year five pupils, raising their levels of literacy, using a high level of information technology, some more computers, working with the parents, working with the children, working with the community, bring in various outside role models. These are all black role models, bringing in schools. We are still at the stage where we are raising funds for this very important programme and we feel that within those three primary schools there are quite high percentages of African Caribbean pupils. We would like to think that we do not have to scrape around for funding. There is a lot of money in Birmingham but when it comes to accessing funding for small organisations it gets extremely difficult. We would like to think that you would be able to support us in some way—we do not know how—but we believe REAL will be a resounding success. We are hoping to follow the children through from year five to year six and then into year seven and to look at children with special educational needs also, but again we need funding to do that.

65. Are you in communication with the Early Excellence Centre?

(*Ms Oliver*) Is that Excellence in Cities?

66. Yes. It is Professor Christine Pascal.

(*Ms Oliver*) I am not in touch with her.

67. We could give you the details because she was a special adviser to our Early Years inquiry and their organisation, which is a stone's throw from this building, is extremely knowledgeable about funding sources, so perhaps that is a first step.

(*Ms Oliver*) Yes.

(*Ms Warmington*) I think there needs to be some sort of examination of national policy, examining the core of what has been delivered in the curriculum, and how you can make the curriculum "racism proof." How can you avoid the sorts of strategies that will perpetuate inequality in our society? There needs to be a look at the delivery mechanisms as well, how teacher training is conducted. As a past teacher, I know that there was not an awful lot of time and energy spent on understanding some of the teaching strategies that we were asked to deliver and how those related to the needs of particular individuals within our community. I feel that there needs to be an emphasis more in the roots of the system and we cannot continue to fragment the system to respond to ethnicity as an issue, not with the growing numbers of mixed race population, not with 43 per cent and growing numbers of ethnic minority groups in Birmingham. We need to provide a comprehensive, quality, mainstream service that caters for the needs of all our children. As an individual, I do not really care whether my child is taught by whoever; what I want is really good quality teaching that does not disadvantage their opportunity to achieve.

Chairman: That is a very good note on which to stop. May I thank you both for being so patient with us and putting up with all these strange questions.

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**Supplementary memorandum from Mrs Sandra Oliver, Education Officer, Birmingham Partnership for Change (EB14)**

I would like to give additional information as follows:

At the end of the evidence giving session, I raised the issue of the monitoring of EMAG funding with the Chairman of the Committee. I asked that this matter be taken forward. My concerns are that although EMAG funding has been allocated to support ethnic minority pupils including African Caribbean pupils, the monitoring of this funding is not rigorous enough in terms of accountability of schools around how they spend the money and whether it is really raising the achievement of African Caribbean pupils in schools. Please take this issue up with the Government.

Mrs Sandra Oliver  
October 2002

**Memorandum from Julia Blois (EB07)**

INTRODUCTION

1. Birmingham LEA is an exciting and challenging authority in which to work. Pupil results continue to improve year on year and the LEA is often at the centre of national educational developments. Over the years it has also pioneered educational change, particularly on behalf of the present Government and this has had a positive impact on the image of teachers in Birmingham.

2. As a teacher of 28 years experience I have witnessed and been part of many changes in the education system. Although on the whole many of the principles and aims of recent Government initiatives are ones I would support, the pace of change is all too often too rapid and not supported either by appropriate resources or quality training. This has a negative and demoralising effect on classroom teachers who are at the forefront of initiative implementation.

3. Working in the Birmingham Authority exacerbates the pressure of national change. All too frequently, the LEA appears to feel the need to bid for involvement in every new initiative and pilot project. There appears to be little evaluation or prioritisation of what is on offer. This results in added pressure on Birmingham teachers. It also can undermine the potential job satisfaction of being involved in new developments. Many of the pilots are short-lived and it appears to classroom teachers, that even though they seem to be successful the pilots are often discontinued or funding is withdrawn.

4. Teaching is an extremely worthwhile job but at present there are severe pressures which are making it increasingly more difficult. When teachers are asked why they leave, or consider leaving, the job they usually cite three main factors, excessive workload, pupil indiscipline and pay. Graduates often give the same three reasons for looking to other professions rather than entering Initial Teacher Training. As a practising classroom teacher I would concur with the views expressed in these national surveys and would wish to draw to the Select Committee's attention my own experiences and concerns.

CURRICULUM CHANGE

5. There has been, over a number of years, frequent change to the content of the curriculum. Curriculum changes are of course often necessary to keep pace with the demands of Further and Higher Education, Employers and indeed educational development in general. However, any change to the curriculum demands revision of material, planning and developing new schemes of work and designing assessment policies to match. If the change is significant training is also needed to ensure that teachers are familiar with the new material and can research it appropriately. In my experience of curriculum change, teachers' time and other resources needed to implement it successfully have never been provided. There appears to be an expectation by both national and local government that teachers should use evenings, weekends and holidays to undertake the necessary additional work.

6. My perception is that in my subject area I never seem to have the same syllabus for more than one year. Major national curriculum changes made by Government are exacerbated by exam boards making frequent "minor" changes to the syllabus which results in constant alteration of teaching plans for exam classes.

7. Too often I am distracted from the all important job of teaching by being required by management to make changes to school handbooks, information for parents, planning documents and Ofsted materials as a result of curriculum change.

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#### ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS

8. I work in a technology college but despite this only last year were computerised reports to parents introduced. Few members of staff have access to computers at home and so they are required to remain on school premises longer than should have been necessary after the end of the pupil sessions to complete them.

9. The school in which I work has excellent administrative staff who will willingly undertake the more routine tasks which in so many other schools teachers appear to do eg compiling class lists, issuing standard letters, printing off information. However, there is often a tension between their work priorities set by management and teachers' needs. This can lead to delay and frustration for all staff. Rigorous deadlines for example can be set by which photocopying should be submitted. This is fine in general but the system does not often cater for an emergency leaving teachers to bulk photocopy in those circumstances.

10. School management needs more effectively to identify and prioritise tasks for teachers and administrative staff. There is a culture in all schools that everything needs to be done and that if there is no one else to do it teachers will plug the gap. This is a major contributory factor to excessive workload.

11. However, teachers themselves, particularly those with responsibilities which involve the co-operation of other colleagues need to take a more planned approach to their work. Often they will generate new ideas which involve other colleagues in extra work at short notice. In addition, the tasks some teachers pass to other colleagues in their faculty or department to do are often ones which should be undertaken by administrative staff. Conversely, on more than one occasion I have experienced decisions to pass appropriate work to administrative staff which they were more than capable of doing but teachers have then been required to check it. I would question whether this is either necessary or an appropriate use of teacher time.

12. School management often recognise that many administrative jobs should not be done by teachers but complain that to address the situation and employ more administrative staff is cost prohibitive. The question must be asked why the use of teachers, who are paid at a much higher rate, is not seen as an expensive solution to the problem.

#### CLASSROOM SUPPORT STAFF

13. Use of these valuable staff in secondary schools is often limited. They are an excellent resource which is often under-utilised through woolly job descriptions, inadequate explanation to teachers on how they can be used and lack of involvement of teachers who will be using them in formulating job descriptions. Sometimes teachers are faced with the opportunity for access to classroom support but the job description is such that the support staff refuse to undertake the tasks teachers would find most helpful. For example the technician to which I have access will not launder tea towels, do general cleaning of worktops and cookers or maintain equipment. These jobs must be done and I have to do them myself.

14. I, together with other teaching colleagues, spend an inordinate amount of time each year supervising tests and invigilating internal and external examinations. I believe this is an example of one of the many activities teachers have done by tradition and yet it is a task which does not require persons with QTS to undertake. It is time which teachers could use much more productively for planning, preparation and marking.

#### PUPIL INDISCIPLINE

15. The school in which I work has a discipline policy which is good in principle and potentially good in practice but is undermined by the excessive bureaucracy required to implement it. Points are awarded for poor behaviour and different numbers of points trigger different responses e.g. referral to head of year or letter to parents. However, the recording of the points and incidents generates a great deal of work for teachers and having undertaken this work there is then a frustration that some of the worst and most persistent offenders are not dealt with effectively.

16. Classroom discipline is a demanding but extremely important aspect of a teacher's role. It is my perception that today's pupils are now much more difficult to deal with. Many teachers may not experience excessive violence but the low level disruption and constant challenge to authority that is a feature of many schools is as soul destroying for a teacher over a long period of time as a violent attack. It drains energy and enthusiasm. To be dealt with effectively requires teachers to have the time and manageable class sizes to ensure that they can deal with the demands such attitudes place on them.

17. Pupils are more often than not very aware of their rights but not of their personal responsibility to exercise some self-discipline. They often know the limitations of a school's discipline policy and exploit this. Where a policy states a commitment to never permanently excluding usually because of the figures the Government publishes to parents the pressure on teachers is immense.

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#### NEW INITIATIVES

18. Birmingham is often in the forefront of new initiatives. I believe that the literacy and numeracy strategies in primary schools have been a success and therefore I can support the rationale for extending these to secondary schools. Excellence in Cities and in particular the gifted and talented programme was a good initiative. However, all of these initiatives generated additional paperwork, revisions to schemes of work and additional meetings. Training for the introduction was inadequate.

19. Whilst welcoming some of the recent developments, I am sceptical about the value of others. Summer schools have been encouraged but they eat into time teachers could spend with their own family and the time they need to re-charge batteries. Quality time with my own family is difficult to achieve. The financial reward for teachers who participate is limited. The overall resources used to finance them would, in my view, be better spent during term time providing additional support for those pupils who need it.

20. Teachers, particularly those who have responsibility for special educational needs, often feel under pressure to run homework clubs and other similar activities. Again it is a massive drain on teachers' time.

21. As a classroom teacher who has to respond to new initiatives and deliver them I am often unaware of where the initiative comes from, what resources are to be provided, and whether the school is required to do it or has the option to choose if it doesn't quite match school priorities. There is rarely sufficient detail given or discussion about its introduction. Space is not created for it and the attitude appears to be simply for teachers to "fit it in".

22. Often the people who attend the training/briefing sessions are senior management who return from them with a desire to implement the project as quickly as possible, regardless of the capacity to do so.

#### INSET

23. I am committed to high quality continuing professional development opportunities. However, the time allocated for INSET is now normally twilight sessions. Quality INSET which is beneficial and of importance should not be undertaken either at the end of a tiring day when an evening of marking and preparation often stretches ahead of most teachers or at weekends at the end of a stressful week.

24. All teachers should have equal access to high quality training but the timing of provision often excludes some colleagues who have family commitments or carer responsibilities and may have already spent several evening engaged in other school related activities.

25. To avoid releasing teachers during the working day, senior staff are often sent on courses and return the information. Cascade training is very limited and teachers need an entitlement to direct access quality CPD during working hours supported by supply teachers who are well trained and valued.

#### FUNDING

26. There never seems to be sufficient funding to introduce any changes which would reduce teachers' workload and help them to concentrate on the job of classroom teaching. Governors and senior managers often seem to have significant amounts of money but their priorities never appear to focus on staff support. There appears to be a huge reliance on staff goodwill. Many teachers have given this willingly over the years but it is now increasingly taken for granted and exploited.

27. I have regularly subsidised from my own salary materials for lessons. This is not unusual among teachers. Some have undertaken considerable personal expense such as purchasing curtains when the school would not buy the blinds necessary to enable her to use her classroom effectively.

#### CONCLUSION

28. Like so many of my colleagues I am a dedicated, committed and conscientious teacher who loves to teach and gets tremendous satisfaction from helping pupils to achieve their full potential. However, despite my experience and dedication I feel that I am not trusted as a professional. I am constantly required to prove what I have done, said or achieved and regularly subjected to moral blackmail and my concern for pupils exploited to encourage me to undertake more and more tasks without time, recognition or remuneration.

29. I have witnessed colleagues resigning to take on lower paid roles to alleviate the stress. I have watched young teachers leave because after a short time they feel they have no work/life balance.

30. I support fully the Government's ambition for a world class education system but I do not feel that it will be achieved unless:

- teachers' freedom and confidence to exercise professional judgement is restored;
- all teachers can access the services of administrative and classroom support staff to remove some of the routine, time consuming tasks which do not require someone with QTS to undertake;
- all teachers have an entitlement to access CPD within working hours;

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- a national framework for introducing new initiatives, either at local or national level, is introduced which states clearly whether they are a statutory requirement or optional, identifies clearly the funding which will be provided to support the introduction, makes provision for quality training of staff and requires the impact on teacher workload to be evaluated from the outset;
- curriculum change is only made when absolutely necessary. When it is required, sufficient time to plan and implement change should be given;
- strategies are introduced, such as changes to the teachers' contract, which will act as levers for change to ensure that school managers are clear on what teachers can be required to do, prioritise work, value teachers' time and recognise that the priority is for teachers to teach;
- there is recognition that teachers are entitled to a work/life balance and measures are introduced to achieve this.

#### JULIA BLOIS—BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

I have taught for over 28 years, having qualified in 1975 as a secondary school teacher of home economics, including food and food science, child development, health education and textiles.

My entire career has been spent teaching pupils in the 11–16-age range.

My current full time teaching post is at Wheelers Lane Boys' School, in Kings Heath in Birmingham, where I have been in post since 1992.

Prior to my appointment with the Birmingham LEA I spent the first four years of my teaching career working in a church school in Bury and from 1978 to 1992 I taught in Queen Elizabeth High School in Hereford and Worcester LEA.

Julia Blois  
September 2002

#### Examination of Witnesses

Ms JULIA BLOIS, Wheeler's Lane Boys' School (a member of NASUWT), Mr ROGER GITTINS, Head Teacher, John Willmott School (a member of the National Union of Teachers), and Mrs LYNN EDWARDS, Saltley School (a member of the Professional Association of Teachers), were examined.

#### Chairman

68. Can I welcome you all and thank you very much for coming to meet the Committee? We are embarked on this full week's attempt to understand education in one city. We have been delighted at the reception we have had and the level of cooperation we have received. Today, we have been getting out to the schools and talking to a whole range of people. Not only are we looking at education in one city but this is the beginning of our year's look at secondary education and we will be looking at the four areas of diversity, whether the government's diversity strategy is working; is it good value for the taxpayers' money. We will be looking at recruitment and retention of staff. We will be looking at attainment of pupils; are there difficult sectors? We will also be looking at school admissions. We are looking at the whole piece but we will be publishing bit by bit. Indeed, we may do a specific report on Birmingham, maybe linked with Auckland in New Zealand, when we go there. What we are not getting at the moment is what is your view of Birmingham as a place in which children are taught in terms of its entirety, a holistic approach. If a bit of that could flavour your answers, that would be most gratefully received. Mr Gittins, would you like to say a few words?

(*Mr Gittins*) I have been in Birmingham for two and a half years. I have worked in seven local authorities over my career of 30 years. I have found Birmingham a very interesting and supportive local education authority to work in, in lots of ways. I found it quite consultative in terms of how it tries to

determine policy. I have worked closely with teachers on that. It is a very mixed city. My own school is in Sutton Coldfield, in the north eastern area of the city, which most people who know the area would suggest was the more affluent part of Birmingham. The schools within it are quite diverse. There are two grammar schools. As in all the city, pupils have the ability to be selected to the King Edward Foundation Schools, of which there are five. There is a former grant maintained school and foundation school right across the road from mine and there is huge pressure from parents, as there is I am sure all over the country, to migrate outwards in terms of admissions. I am a member of the Admissions Forum and we have new admissions criteria for the whole of Birmingham this year. I have spent most of the last two weeks discussing with anxious parents what the impact of that process will be.

69. Could we have a copy of the admissions criteria?

(*Mr Gittins*) I am sure someone could provide one. In terms of the LEA, the LEA part of the funding formula is funded as additional needs so more money would go into what would loosely be termed disadvantaged areas within the city as opposed to the sort of area I work in. That is certainly true in part with Excellence in Cities money as well. That is not an issue as far as I am concerned and as far as teachers are concerned, but there is a significant amount of differential funding per pupil organised in

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[Chairman Cont]

terms of need through the LEA. The LEA has a very large advisory service which most people find very supportive of schools.

(Ms Blois) I have been a teacher for 28 years, full time. I have worked in Birmingham for ten years. Prior to that, I worked in what was originally Herefordshire and Worcestershire, in the Herefordshire part of it, in a rural community and prior to that I worked in Bury, in Lancashire. I have worked in mixed education schools until I came to Birmingham. I work in King's Heath, in what was formerly a boys' school, which is now a technology college and we got technology college status two years ago in partnership with one of the King Edward independent schools, the Camp Hill site, which you will have heard of.

70. We are going there tomorrow.

(Ms Blois) You will hear all about the technology college and their unique partnership. It is an exciting and challenging LEA to work for, probably the most exciting and challenging I have ever worked for. They are at the forefront of a lot of initiatives launched by the successive governments. They want to take on board everything that they can and try it out here. It has the advantages that you get to use the initiatives and the disadvantage side is that a lot of them are short term so you put work into them and find that the funding dries up and the initiative fizzles out, which is very frustrating for all the people concerned who have put time and effort into it. It is the centre of national education development. It has been very supportive of me. When I first came to Birmingham it took a long time to settle into the education authority. I had come from education authorities in schools where you did not speak out. If you had views to express, you either kept them to yourself or discussed them with colleagues in the staff room. In Birmingham I found you were encouraged to say, "I do not feel this is working and these are the reasons" or, "This is a brilliant initiative. We really ought to push this" and people would listen. The support service would listen. They were interested in what you thought as an employee. In our wage slips there were always phone numbers: "Do you want help with this? Ring up and talk to us." I was not used to that. Some of the initiatives are a little too quick to be taken on without the necessary resourcing and training that staff needs.

(Mrs Edwards) I work in an inner city school, Sattley School. I was educated in Birmingham except for the time when I teacher trained. That is the only time I have not been under Birmingham's education authority. I came back home because it is a good authority and that was 20 lots years ago. I have worked at the school now for 13 years and that is after six years doing relief work around many different secondary schools in Birmingham. The main problem seems to be how long funding is going to last for. You start something up. Will it be there next year? Will it be there financially five years away. That causes tension. There is also a lack of flexibility with where the money can be spent. Whilst it might be needed for a new computer room, it has to go on some of the special educational needs stuff. While it might be needed for special educational needs, it is tied into a computer suite. That is causing some problems in the school I am in where there is a tying

in with what the money can be spent on. Presumably, if it is causing problems for us, it is causing problems elsewhere.

**Paul Holmes**

71. I am not saying this just because I am a member of NASUWT. The memorandum of evidence that you submitted gives a very eloquent account of what is good about teaching and what tremendous down sides have built up in recent years and the effect that has on the tensions. Had I tried to write this two years ago when I was still teaching, I would have tried to say the same things, I am sure not as clearly as you have done. Some of my colleagues would be rather more sceptical and say this is a case of teachers and professional associations crying wolf and exaggerating, over-egging the pudding. How would you respond to that?

(Ms Blois) I can understand that. After I had written this when I was looking through it again to make any extra notes to bring to the Committee, I got to thinking what I do not want to do is to whinge unmercifully about it. There are good and bad sides to every job. You have to do it and you then understand the pressures. There are pressures in every job, but if you have ever written one of these reports that is how it is. I am a northerner through and through and in the north we call a spade a spade, pardon the expression. This is how I perceive the role of a teacher in the job. NASUWT is a proactive union but that does not mean to say that I think everything that any union says is wonderful. There are things I would adopt from the union and things I would not. This is written from the heart, from how I perceive it. It is a brilliant job. When you are in a classroom with children, you are educating children, you can see the learning process taking place, you can help those who have not quite got the message and you can see the others who have the message doing well, it is brilliant. It is when the doors open and everything else rushes in past you as the pupils leave that you begin to question why you are doing the job. I suppose you can always say, "It is not the job I went into" if you are a 20 something year old going into teaching now. If you are 28 years down the line, it is not the job you came into, but we are educating tomorrow's citizens. 50 years ago, when you talked to teachers who taught 50 years ago and said to them, "What was it like then?" it is a completely different planet, let alone a completely different world. It was written from the heart; it was not designed to pull the wool over anybody's eyes. It is how I perceive teaching.

Chairman: We thought it was excellent.

**Ms Munn**

72. Paul was on the visit to the same school as I was and one of the head teachers said, "There is an issue about how we as teachers have portrayed the profession." If we talk up the bad side too much, are we not contributing to the problem of recruitment, because it is a great job. While we were there, I also spent a lot of time talking to a teacher there who was coming through the graduate recruitment process, who had been in sales and had come in, in his late

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[Continued

**[Ms Munn Cont]**

forties. It has transformed his life. He had such a passion for the job and the subject he was teaching. How do you get that balance in terms of if you really do believe it is a job which gives job satisfaction which, in his previous job as a sales person, he was not getting? If you talk up too many of the negative things, are you not in danger of putting off just that kind of person who has such a lot to offer as somebody with experience in other walks of life?

(*Mr Gittins*) I have two members of staff who have been off with long term stress for nine months and the figures show increasing amounts of that. We talked earlier about funding. Significant proportions of the funding at my school, probably as much as ten per cent a year on a £3 million budget, come from separate bids, separate initiatives, all of which have separate targets, separate monitoring. Those are some of the things that come through the door. People are accountable for all different things in all different ways and teachers feel that is a real pressure. They want to take part in that. They want the money because some of the things that happen to it benefit children's education, but each of them produces extra work. Teachers set incredibly high standards. They are not happy with 96 or 97 per cent. They do go on about the three per cent because each of those three per cent is a child who is not achieving what we would want them to achieve. In that respect, teachers bring pressure onto themselves by their very professionalism. In terms of the effect on recruitment, we do want to shout from the rooftops what a great job it is and we must think it is a great job because I cannot see any purpose for doing it otherwise. We do not do it for the pay or the status; we do it because we love it and we love young people. In fora like this, teachers have a responsibility to fight for a better deal and say, "This is a problem", because I do not think anyone would disagree on the main objectives of raising achievement and the social inclusion agenda and getting everybody involved in reducing disaffection. Therefore, when we do whinge, it is because we feel we have a responsibility to improve the situation, not for ourselves—I do not think teachers do it for that—but for the children in the schools.

(*Ms Blois*) We do a great job, as a profession. If you look at the rising standards, particularly in Birmingham as an improving authority. Birmingham schools are improving. We do a great job but without the points I have raised we could do an even better job. It is the little, niggly things that bring practising teachers down that are the problem, not the job itself. These things bring my job satisfaction down. If I had some support to do some of these, I could do an even better job than I am doing now.

73. How much of that is about the individual management within individual schools and how much choice and ability they have to use their resources? We went to a school this morning, admittedly one which was well resourced and in a pretty well off area comparatively speaking. One of the things the teachers there were saying was that it was great there because they had a lot of the administrative stuff taken off them. "We have a reprographics department to do all the

photocopying" and all that sort of stuff. How much of that is a problem which is not as difficult to solve as we might think?

(*Ms Blois*) You said yourself it was a well funded school. In some schools that are not quite as well funded, it is a big issue as to who does it to try and take the workload off teachers.

#### Chairman

74. Our job is accountability of the Department as to wise spending of their money. In a sense, we are part of the problem because we demand that when the government spends money they are accountable for it and it makes a difference and adds value. On the one hand, we know that there are loads more resources in the education system now. Tim Brighouse said it last night. Everyone says we have loads of resources. We went to Sheldon Heath School this morning. Do you think it is a revolution of rising expectations? As you have more money, you have got more articulate about what you want done with it? There is a voice that says when there was less money and you were resigned to no new money coming into education you were quieter about what the problems were.

(*Ms Blois*) A lot more is expected of us. We have looked at our professionalism and said, "This is brilliant. This is good. This fulfils us. This is challenging. This is what we all need", but do we need to stand by the photocopier and fill in forms?

75. This Committee looks at the number of teaching support systems being appointed over the last three years and it is enormous. These people presumably are taking a load off you as teachers. The 70,000 classroom assistants do not exist?

(*Mrs Edwards*) They exist but they are helping with individual children within the classroom. You cannot send them to do things like photocopying. It is not part of their job.

76. There has also been a big increase in administrative staff in schools as well.

(*Mrs Edwards*) Some of it is going on but it is not everywhere yet. We are having to appoint an administrator at some point because of the paperwork coming through purely to do with the examination system. Forget the internal sort but the external sort, the GCSEs, the GNVQs, the course work, the bits of paper flying around. I was talking to the deputy head yesterday morning prior to coming here and he said a stack of paper had arrived that big from GNVQs to the person who has just taken that role over.

#### Paul Holmes

77. I went to the same school as Meg this morning. Another group of teachers were explaining the support staff that they had which was like nothing I had ever seen in my years of teaching. They were also saying that the head had told them that they would have to sack some of them because their levels of funding are coming down because they were no longer a grant maintained school. In your schools is the problem of teacher morale or recruitment and

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[Continued

**[Paul Holmes Cont]**

retention? Is it worse now than it was five or ten years ago or is it just a matter of perception? Is it any different?

(*Mr Gittins*) In terms of recruitment, I have already outlined the fact that my school is in a more "favoured" area. It is easier to recruit teachers in the area where my school is than it is in some parts of Birmingham. Having said that, I advertised for an English teacher in April and got not a single applicant in a school with an excellent record of professional development, support for newly qualified teachers, that pays its newly qualified teachers from 1 July rather than 1 September to try and get them in. When you look at the age profile in terms of teachers recruitment is a huge issue. The quality of the people coming into teaching is excellent. It is getting enough of them. The situation is masked by the use of agency staff. We are not sending children home because they have not got a teacher in front of them. I use the word "teacher" loosely. When you have a situation where the supply agency you are paying £160 a day to send you someone whose first experience in a school is walking through your door that morning, that is very difficult. As far as morale is concerned, I think that is mixed in terms of people feeling pressured. The issues of stress are there. You said there were a lot more administrators. I would say there is a lot more administration as well linked in with this whole issue of bid culture and monitoring and monitoring and targets.

#### Chairman

78. There are a lot more teachers.

(*Mr Gittins*) There are. In primary schools there are more teachers. My pupil/teacher ratio at school is roughly the same as it was two years ago. More teachers will produce smaller class sizes which will raise achievement. I do not think that should affect how we do things. That would be the way it would work if you could afford more teachers to reduce class size, rather than necessarily reduce contact time or whatever, although from a teacher's point of view they may prefer it to be that way round. It is an interesting question. Teachers work very hard. They carry on what they are doing because of the pleasure they get from the achievements of young people.

Chairman: No one on this Committee would deny that. We were talking to a head of English this morning who said she works twice as hard now as when she did when she first came into the profession.

#### Mr Chaytor

79. Julia, in your evidence you quote your assistant who refuses to wash the tea towels. Is that not entirely an issue for the individual school and the job description that was written when that classroom assistant was appointed? It is hard to take that as a serious argument, that teachers have to work harder when the classroom assistant is there but somehow the job spec does not include washing the tea towels.

(*Ms Blois*) The teaching assistants have a very woolly job description. It is actually not a teaching assistant; it is a technician who said, "That is not part of my job description; I am not doing it." The fact of

the matter is I am well paid for being on my knees in front of the washing machine and tumble drier X number of times a day as a food technology specialist. I perceive that my time could be better spent with pupils. I did one of these studies of how long I spent teaching pupils and how long I spent administering the lesson and the technicians. In a 50 minute lesson, it amounts to spending ten minutes with the pupils and 40 minutes on everything else. Is this a good use of my professionalism?

80. I am sure everybody on the Committee would agree but I think most of my colleagues would say that the question is why does not the head teacher sort it out. It is purely an issue of industrial relations. The job spec for your technician is clearly inadequate. Why is it not sorted out in the individual school?

(*Ms Blois*) Our technician will tell you that he already does a full week and he has more than enough. He does not take his supply of holidays. He will come up with all sorts of reasons. The bottom line is: in the department we need another technician. As long as that is a need, it is not being fulfilled in my area particularly. I have to do the jobs myself because there is not enough money to have another technician.

81. Presumably, you are on your knees at the end of each week also?

(*Ms Blois*) Yes.

82. Is this not entirely a domestic matter for the school, the allocation of tasks within the school?

(*Ms Blois*) I cannot be the only one with a technical problem like this. There must be lots of schools in the area that have the same logistical and technical support problem.

#### Mr Pollard

83. You did say in your evidence it was not a matter of time. He refused to do it because it was not his job. That is a matter of management, purely.

(*Ms Blois*) Yes, and maybe that is another issue, that the management in schools is not as it should be, but I cannot criticise my management. We have just had a new head so it would be totally wrong to say it is the head's responsibility. Yes, it has been raised more times than I care to remember.

#### Mr Chaytor

84. On the question of administrative tasks, you say few members of staff have access to computers at home. Is that the case?

(*Ms Blois*) Yes.

85. Few teachers in your school and, by extension, in Birmingham, have a computer at home?

(*Ms Blois*) There are a lot of our members of staff who are not computer literate.

86. What are they doing teaching then?

(*Ms Blois*) Teaching is not about using a computer, surely?

87. Given the nature of the society we are in and the fact that we are moving into the information technology age, our task is to prepare our young

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[Continued

**[Mr Chaytor Cont]**

people for this. How can it be that there are teachers in your school who are not computer literate, whatever the subject they are teaching?

(*Mr Gittins*) To some extent, that is addressed through the NOF training that is coming in for ICT skills for existing teachers and new teachers coming into the profession, but that training does take a long time. The majority of that training is done in the teachers' own time. I have watched my wife complete the training and I have seen the considerable number of hours she has spent doing that at home. I think teachers would recognise that that is something they want to take part in but it is not an overnight issue to bring your skills up to that level.

88. To come to the question of whether teachers have PCs at home, you are still saying that few teachers have a personal computer at home?

(*Ms Blois*) Most families of the teachers I work with have computers at home for their children but cannot access them because they do not have the time.

89. It is not the case that few members of staff do not have computers at home?

(*Ms Blois*) They do not have access to them. We certainly do not have access in school.

#### Chairman

90. Roger and Lynn, is that your experience?

(*Mr Gittins*) It is difficult because that would vary from school to school. We talked about increased funding but there are increased demands as well. For example, we as a school try to work forward to a situation over the next two years where every teacher in the school has a laptop. There is a government initiative coming in and we should recognise that. It is very slow in terms of the speed at which we want to do that, but that is a useful development that will start to answer some of the problems, once the training comes on board as well. As a school, for example, we have just received £21,000 for electronic attendance. That will buy the software but in order to make it work the whole school needs to be networked and part of it is not. Every teacher needs a laptop. The cost to the school of introducing electronic attendance by next September is £70,000. As in most walks of life, if you need a laptop, you generally have a laptop but speaking as a head teacher when you are trying to allocate that expenditure, whether it be to that or to the technician who is washing the tea towels, you always look to see what the impact is on children's learning. Some of it is more diverse than others.

Chairman: This Committee would profoundly agree with you that what matters in education is the quality of teaching and learning experience in the classroom.

#### Mr Chaytor

91. In terms of both your schools, you are saying that even within a technology school with specialist technology status your teachers do not have access to the PCs at school?

(*Ms Blois*) That is right.

(*Mr Gittins*) Mine would have access at school, the majority most of the time but I would not be able to comment about at home.

(*Ms Blois*) We have an ICT suite and we have a technology suite which is fully equipped with computers. We have now the arrival of laptops for each member of staff but they are not networked because the cabling is not in. We have overhead projectors that are in school but not in place because the cabling has not been done and we all still do not have access to laptops.

(*Mrs Edwards*) The only way we have access to computers ourselves at home is if we bought them but we are using them as a tool for our job. We do have access in school. There are four machines now in the staff room plus the computer suite. We have the usual problems with the network system: "Oh, the network has crashed", despite improvements upon improvements.

Chairman: We all live with that at times.

#### Jonathan Shaw

92. One of the other areas that the Committee is going to be looking at is the diversity of provision. Two schools have technology status?

(*Mrs Edwards*) We do not have specialised technology but I think we are looking at specialised science.

93. Did you have much difficulty in raising the 50,000?

(*Mr Gittins*) It is an interesting point to give you an insight into Birmingham because most of the children who come to my school live within Sutton Coldfield. There is a very well endowed charity called Sutton Coldfield Municipal Charities that finds sponsorship money for any secondary school in Sutton Coldfield that wants to apply for specialist status. I wrote a letter; I went to the trustees and I got £100,000.

(*Ms Blois*) Ours is a unique partnership with King Edward's Camp Hill so it was a 50/50 partnership. We are going to technology college status but it is never explained exactly how the funding came about. It was senior management staff who put in the bid and knew anything about the nuts and bolts of it.

94. How do you think technology status has affected your school?

(*Mr Gittins*) I do not think it has affected it in terms of having an impact on admissions. I do not think there are any community specialist schools in the country that I know of that exercise their right to change their admission criteria, although there are one or two foundation schools that do. We do not differentiate in terms of admissions. It has brought us additional resources. It has answered some of the ICT type questions. Two years ago we had 65 computers in school; now we have 225. We have had rooms refurbished and we have been able to use it to lever in other money from a whole range of places. It has hugely increased the number of different targets, criteria and so on in that respect, which has led to a certain amount of confusion. It provides an identity for the school. Technology is an interesting one, perhaps a little separate from others. Because of the

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[Continued

**[Jonathan Shaw Cont]**

involvement of ICT, along with maths, science and DandT, it impacts far more right across the curriculum.

95. One of the things we have heard is that schools only apply for this because it is additional money.

(*Mr Gittins*) I would suggest it is a key issue because the workload involved is enormous. The application started the day after I took up post in January 2000. It took something like 45 person days of members of my senior staff and other heads of department to put that together. Were the resources attached to it not very significant, schools would not go through that process.

96. How has it affected you, Julia, in the classroom?

(*Ms Blois*) We now have the ability to pay a colleague to become manager of ICT.

97. But not someone to wash the tea towels!

(*Ms Blois*) We have a lot of the hardware turning up in school now which we would not have had if we had not technology college status. It also links closely with our independent school because we have meetings with similar colleagues in the independent sector to start planning forward. Our feeder junior schools have benefited. We are running all sorts of joint projects with them to bring in the feeder schools into our technology department so that they have access to the equipment. We try to network all schools so that they can produce some of their schemes of work in junior schools which we can then print out for them or make up for them from their designs, which takes the stress off members of staff in the junior schools and means that we are using our specialisms to the full.

98. You say that the partnerships are alive and working. This has been one of the criticisms of specialist schools, that they sign the form saying they will work with all sorts of people and the reality is that they do not. That is one of the things OFSTED highlight.

(*Ms Blois*) The process is not infinite. We are not a technology college for ever. When the review cycle comes round, you have to show that you have achieved what you set out to do and we have worked very hard in the school to do that. It is rewarding to see the junior schools in. We have done a lot of staff training in the department and we have pupils who come in and work for that as well. It has given us the flexibility to do that.

Chairman: Does not the whole ethos of the specialist school breed a kind of "I'm all right Jack" attitude? Two of you are in this rather privileged category but everyone is not in that category. Some of us are getting a picture of Birmingham that it is all right if you are in the more affluent bit or even the 50/50 bits of Birmingham but what about the most deprived parts of Birmingham and the comprehensives that have no special status?

Ms Munn: Looking at the other group which went to different schools this morning, we did go to a school in a less well off area which has specialist status, where the head and the staff and the pupils were very positive about that. Although they found the process demanding and had been turned down once, the head said that, having got through a second time she could see that the second plan they produced

was better and now, having got to that stage, they thought the process was more rigorous. I think it would be unfair to say that all of the Committee had not seen that.

**Chairman**

99. We also saw Sheldon Heath School, where they are going to apply for specialist school status but they already have some City Excellence money, so they are in a special category. Are we right? We have arrived on planet Birmingham and we are trying to understand. It does seem to us that somewhere out there there are comprehensive schools in deprived areas that have no special status, are struggling to attract first choice students. What I am trying to get from you is the sort of debate we had last night between Professor Ted Wragg and Tim Brighouse, where one suggested he was in favour of universities and Tim was very worried about the impact down the chain, if you like. I wondered what you thought, as trade unionists.

(*Mr Gittins*) Because Birmingham is an Excellence in Cities area, the majority of the specialist school bids go in through Excellence in Cities. It is a slightly ring fenced area with greater chance of success. There has been huge cooperation and discussion at the EIC partnership meetings about which schools should be supported. The LEA put a huge amount of time and resources into supporting those schools. It was quite a democratic, consultative process. Other schools have got it individually but the vast majority have gone through that process. The LEA supported that. As a head teacher coming into Birmingham from outside, within the funding formula for Birmingham, there is quite a significant move—others would know the figures better than me in terms of percentages—of more money following additional needs in terms of the way the funding formula is worked out. Within Excellence in Cities, there is a considerable additional needs element in the funding. My school, whose additional needs are nowhere near as great as some of the inner city schools, receives £42,000 a year Excellence in Cities money for 1,100 students. A school in the inner city with perhaps 600 or 700 students may receive anything up to ten times that amount. It is a huge, significant part of the budget. You then come back to the issue about whether that is a transitional part of their budget or whether it is going to be there for ever, because for them it is probably as much as 25 per cent of their budget.

100. At the end of that, the Department for Education and Skills has a diversity agenda that believes you drive up standards by having specialist skills, foundation skills, city academies, you name it. It seems to me the three of you are all on board. This is the way to go. This will raise standards.

(*Mr Gittins*) That was not a decision in principle. I was asked earlier if we would go for that without the resources. It is a decision partly of pragmatism and goes back to that bidding culture. If all that money comes out of the education budget and 20 per cent is top sliced and put into diversity and so on, if you do not bid for your share of that 20 per cent, whether you agree with the principles or not—

101. But do you?

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MS JULIA BLOIS, MR ROGER GITTINS  
AND MRS LYNN EDWARDS

[Continued

**[Chairman Cont]**

(*Mr Gittins*) I do not personally agree with the whole issue of city academies.

## 102. Specialist schools?

(*Mr Gittins*) I feel each school has the ability to develop its own curriculum and its own strengths in any way it wishes and does not necessarily need to be constrained by what is quite an artificial bidding structure. I meant to bring my bid with me and I have not, but it is *that* thick and it has 500 separate targets in. The monitoring of that is huge. If you want to go down that road, yes, you can achieve wonders like that in an individual way for a very small number of children. The impact that has is, to me, really quite large and I do not think that is taken into account. What we should be doing is raising standards right across the board rather than separately.

103. There was a very articulate 15 year old in class that we started talking to this morning. I said, "What do you think of this school?" He said, "I think it could be improved." The deputy head was next to him, so he was pretty brave. I said, "Give me an example." He said, "Books. We do not get the books that they get in grammar schools." He knows and I thought it was a very interesting insight. There he was in a pretty average comprehensive saying, "I think I could do better."

(*Ms Blois*) Prior to the admissions system being changed, parents could apply for places in the right number of schools. We would be over-subscribed, pre-technology college status, because our staff and our head teachers worked hard to raise the profile of our school in all sorts of ways that were not particularly blindingly educational. We have a uniform. It is strictly adhered to. If you come to our school, this is the standard of dress you are expected to have. That impresses the parents. If you are strict on a minor issue, you are bound to be the same in their minds on the major issues. A lot of the admissions would be creamed off by King Edward's. The question you are asking is applicable to our school, so we had to look at what was available to us at the time to say is there a way we can raise our standards to the benefit of our pupils. That was one of the ways with the technology college bid. It is to do with the finances, yes. It brought a lot of equipment in and a lot of support for us and the fact that we could do it in partnership with our biggest rival, the independent school, was an added bonus. Yes, it has improved our situation. We have a boys' school down the road that is not doing as well as us.

**Valerie Davey**

104. Can I declare I am a member of the NUT and probe a bit further on the change in admissions? All of you have said that we are sitting in an improving LEA with improved schools and yet they have changed the admissions policy. Is this on account of diversity in schools? What has prompted this change and can you indicate what are the two or three key things which have changed in this admissions policy and why?

(*Mr Gittins*) I went onto the Admissions Forum about half-way through the discussions about the change and the thrust of the change was trying to allow a greater agreement of parental preference and

also to try and provide a level playing field for all the schools. I am sure in every town and city of a reasonable size, there is a view among parents for whatever reason that they may migrate outwards. The situation was hugely difficult to explain how it worked previously. I have 180 places at school and 450 first preferences. I have to make 350 offers to fill 180 places because, under the old system, parents could have four first choices, one at King Edward School, one at a grammar school, one at a foundation school and then their first choice community school. In the area I was in, unless parents picked the right community school, we only offered to first choices. What they are able to do now under the new system is rank schools in order and the highest of the five where they meet the criteria, which may be selection or distance, is the one they get an offer for. The agenda of the LEA is to raise standards in all schools and persuade parents that all schools are good schools. That is certainly the message I send. However, there are still parents who would rather move their children three or four miles to the outskirts of the town than go to the school in the centre of town, irrespective of how good a school it is.

105. We will look at that in detail. It is an issue that we are going to be concerned about, particularly in light of diversity. The other area where you would hope the LEA would be supportive would be the other end, the exclusions. What is the policy in terms of exclusions in Birmingham?

(*Mr Gittins*) As a head teacher, I am at the sharp end of that when it comes to making decisions. I would have to say that the support that I have had in two and a half years from the exclusions office, a dedicated office within the LEA to provide advice for head teachers as well as support for parents and pupils in that situation, has been absolutely superb, much better than any other local authority I have worked with. The quality of staff and advice is absolutely excellent. The provision for prevention of exclusion and for dealing with young people who are excluded is, in my view, really very good.

## 106. Would the other two of you echo that?

(*Ms Blois*) Yes. We can buy into various schemes that the authority provides for college places on a 20 per cent day time, so some of our pupils feel the education system, they perceive, is not doing what they want. They can go to college. We have a specialist worker assigned to us by the LEA who comes in to discuss problem cases before they ever become a permanent exclusion.

(*Mrs Edwards*) We have just set up a teaching and learning centre for the individuals who would otherwise end up being repeatedly excluded. That is within the school. Before they go to the behavioural units, there is something in school so that we can take them out of particular lessons. Kids who otherwise would be suspended, excluded, permanent exclusion, looking for a new home—they stay in the community with the people they know. Hopefully it will work and they will become school members all the way through school.

(*Ms Blois*) When the pupils finally do leave us because they are excluded, some of them end up at various centres. Because of my work with COMPAC, the business and education partnership, I meet with a teacher from the centre. He takes great delight in

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MINUTES OF EVIDENCE TAKEN BEFORE  
THE EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE*17 September 2002]*MS JULIA BLOIS, MR ROGER GITTINS  
AND MRS LYNN EDWARDS*[Continued***[Valerie Davey Cont]**

telling me about our pupils and how well they have done. I can relate that back to school. That is a triumph for them and we are always pleased that, when they have moved to other centres, they have blossomed, so when you exclude a pupil it is not always the end of the line for us. We always find out what has happened to them.

**Chairman**

107. You are very emotive about this. The union line on this is that one of the things putting off teacher recruitment and retention is discipline, violent pupils, but that is not the picture you have just given us.

*(Ms Blois)* There are always pupils for whom you are concerned. We deal with them as best we can in school. The criticism would be of management then. I am aware that I am trying hard not to criticise too much the management but the management of the discipline policies in school has been up for criticism by a large number of my colleagues. These pupils

who persistently disrupt lessons are still in school and we do not go for exclusion unless it is an absolute last resort. We are coping with pupils like that as best we can.

108. You are finding it difficult to teach because of the level of indiscipline in your classrooms?

*(Ms Blois)* In some cases, yes.

109. Is that true of your school, Roger?

*(Mr Gittins)* There are two conflicting agendas here, the social inclusion agenda and the issues about effective teaching and learning in classrooms. They are sometimes seen by members of staff to be in conflict. What is trying to happen in Birmingham through Excellence in Cities and so on is the introduction of initiatives like learning mentors and so on to provide additional support for teachers and work with specific individuals to improve their behaviour and deal with the problem within school.

Chairman: I am going to halt the formal proceedings now. Thank you very much indeed.

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WEDNESDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2002

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Members present:

Mr Barry Sheerman, in the Chair

Mr David Chaytor  
Valerie Davey  
Jeff Ennis  
Paul Holmes

Ms Meg Munn  
Mr Kerry Pollard  
Jonathan Shaw  
Mr Andrew Turner

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### **Memorandum from Mr Andrew Arnott (EB 05)**

#### INDUCTION TO HEADSHIP

I was appointed to the post of Headteacher at Stockland Green School in October 2000, with effect from January 2001. The school is an 11 to 16 mixed comprehensive of 600 pupils situated in the Erdington and Stockland Green areas of Birmingham. We are close to the famous Gravelly Hill interchange of the M6 motorway, "Spaghetti Junction". 44 per cent of our pupils take free school meals and about 15 per cent of our intake has African or African Caribbean ethnicity, a further 20 per cent are from Indian or Asian ethnic groups, and about 65 per cent are white caucasian.

At the conclusion of the interview and having accepted the post, I was told that not only was the school "facing challenging circumstances" and suffering from low morale and pupil attainment, but it was likely to be inspected very soon, probably before Easter 2001. At a subsequent, more full briefing by senior officers from Birmingham LEA, the details were clarified; there were low expectations, morale and levels of pupil attainment.

As a result of preparatory work with the Leadership Team at Stockland Green School, and working closely with governors, we were able to quickly produce a timed, costed and relevant School Development Plan which was published at the end of January. This was good timing, because I had been contacted by HMI only four days into the new post, and told that we would be inspected on 6 February.

The outcome of the February inspection was that we had a clear vision of how to develop the plan. HMI reported that our timed and costed plan built around our "impact dates", provided a relevant and achievable method of implementation. They were content for us to work with the support of governors and Birmingham LEA, to improve the performance of the school. We set up a support programme with Birmingham which included adviser support in key subject areas and two LEA mini inspections to monitor progress. These were scheduled to take place in November 2001 and spring 2002.

#### THE CHANGE PROCESS

We focused upon a range of issues for change or development and identified them in our development plan, which has now become our Improvement plan. These were:

- Cultures among pupils, teachers, governors and parents.
- Targets which would keep us on track to effect a transformational change for the school community, (100 per cent increase in 5+ GCSE at C or better by 2004.)
- Planning at school and department level, and with particular emphasis on schemes of work and lesson planning.
- Design a new curriculum and flexibility to allow us to take advantage of opportunities as and when they presented themselves. We also designed a range of levers to raise standards. These included pilots of full GNVQ courses for which pupils must sign up to two extra "twilight" sessions a week, and regular "flexible learning days" for Key Stage 4 Science groups.
- Delivery; improving the quality of teaching, resourcing and the learning environment.
- Monitoring and Evaluation; to include lesson observation, data analysis and book looks as a routine cycle "bedded in" to the culture of the school.
- Celebration and Motivation programmes to apply a wide range of methods for pupils and staff.
- Support networks to include critical friends for departments, faculty support via ICT co-ordinator and Key stage strategy manager, attainment review monitoring support for pupils and parents, and behaviour support for pupils when necessary via Key stage teams supported by a range of strategies which include learning mentors and external provision where appropriate.

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- Community; working with our parents and neighbours to provide concrete support through effective liaison.

#### OUTCOMES TO DATE

1. In summer 2001, our Year 9 achieved Key stage 3 results ahead of target in the core subjects and this year we were able to sustain our improved performance from last year.

2. In summer 2001 during what was a year of transition, we comfortably exceeded our expectations at Key Stage 4 for pupils leaving school with at least one GCSE grade and we achieved our target for pupils achieving five or more GCSE grades at C or better. 97 per cent of our Year 11 pupils achieved one or more grades at GCSE. Historically, since the 1970s, the school has never exceeded 21 per cent of pupils achieving five or more GCSE grades at C or above. We are setting extremely challenging targets of 50 per cent for the future which give us something to build towards. We think we can get close to these targets by working with governors to offer a more innovative curriculum, improve the quality of teaching and maintain the progression towards creating a culture of learning and achievement among pupils, parents and the school community.

3. Other indicators of success include a reduction in the number of behaviour referrals, an encouraging evaluative report of our review programme from our monitoring team at Keele University, and positive feedback from pupils, parents and our community.

4. Our outline bid to become a specialist technology college was accepted by Birmingham in March and given "Priority Status" in Phase 3. This means that Birmingham will support us in the submission of our full bid in March 2005, with a view to achieving specialist status in September 2005. We were one of only nine schools in the city to achieve "Priority Status" in this round, out of about 35 who submitted outline bids. We have subsequently responded positively to an invitation to move into Phase 2 and submit our bid between October 2003 and March 2004.

5. In March we were awarded the "School Achievement Award 2002".

6. In July we were notified that we had been successful in our assessment for the "Investors in People" Award.

7. Two LEA review inspections in November 2001 and June 2002, report continued improvement in teaching and learning, leadership, monitoring and morale.

8. The school is now oversubscribed with first choices from pupils wishing to join our Year 7 in September 2002. We have a waiting list of 63.

#### CONCLUSION

Clearly much has been achieved in the last 18 months. However, we are committed to maintaining and extending the quality of our service. In order to achieve this we are constantly seeking to improve. In order to further increase our capacity for development, we are currently recruiting a Deputy Headteacher to act as the leading change agent from January 2003, to maintain our momentum and ensure that we continue to offer the best service to our pupils and community.

*Mr Andrew Arnott*

*September 2002*

#### **Further Memorandum from Mr Andrew Arnott (EB 08)**

I applaud the emphasis placed on education by the government, but deplore the tendency to prescribe and centralise which has the effect of diminishing trust between the profession and the Government. The emphasis on punitive measures serves to remind the profession of the damaging legacy of the Tory years. However, the channelling of funds in such a way as to benefit communities in deprived urban areas has been welcomed and is making a difference in our cities.

I list some responses to the invitation to explore successes and challenges of education, as well as some observations on the impact of Government policy in Birmingham.

- I welcome the easing of prescription relating to the National Curriculum and hope that this signals a renewed attempt to work together with education professionals, building trust and making it easier for teachers to adapt the curriculum to the needs of pupils and communities.
- Recruitment remains a huge issue. It seems only possible to staff schools if we appoint unqualified teachers. While I recognise that attempts to make education a more attractive career have been made, the effects of eighteen years of damage to morale, confidence and reputation is still with us. The profession needs a degree of deregulation to give Heads and Governing Bodies more flexibility

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to enable urban schools to attract quality staff. Indeed we ought to be taking steps to attract our most able teachers to work in our most challenging and needy communities if we are to raise the “floor levels” of attainment in the nation as a whole.

- The hierarchy of secondary schools as announced recently seems perverse. To encourage successful schools to experiment in a climate of deregulation, and to treat schools facing challenging circumstances as pariahs serves simply to create extra difficulties for our most deprived communities. It is often the case that schools serving our most challenging communities are not recognised for the centres of excellence which they often are. In Birmingham, we receive leaflets from Beacon Schools which often seem to be schools serving more affluent communities and in some cases schools with selective entries. In my experience, there is outstanding teaching in our most challenging schools which could usefully be disseminated. Let us have more recognition for schools facing challenging circumstances, and those who choose to work in these very demanding communities.
- The profession must work with the Government to repair the damage done in the eighties and early nineties. There are encouraging signs that teachers’ professional reputation is improving, but together Government and Educators must show that we are working towards common goals and tackling the problems that beset our schools in order to promote public and professional confidence.
- The introduction of “para-professionals”, such as Learning Support Assistants and Learning Mentors have made a major contribution to the quality of teaching and learning in schools. They have also created opportunities for people who wish to make a contribution to education without taking on the responsibilities of a teacher. In my school our para-professionals are highly respected and valued by everyone. We have experienced much larger responses to recruitment advertisements for LSAs and mentors than for teachers, which suggests that there is a sizeable untapped resource available to schools.
- Advanced Skills Teachers (AST) offer a welcome alternative route for experienced and skilled colleagues. We are just beginning to explore their potential, but early signs in my school suggest that they can make a major impact on teaching and learning. However, I am concerned that we remain aware of the need to ensure that the pay framework supports appropriate career progression for middle managers such as heads of departments so that the right people are attracted into these crucial roles in schools.
- The problems that have affected examining boards in recent years illustrate the necessity of a review of the whole examination administration system. There is also a real issue of “over testing” as children progress through the Key Stages.
- The Government’s focus on quality of teaching and learning together with pupil progress and attainment, is applauded. In recent times a more constructive and less punitive inspection system has contributed to a raising of standards in schools. This is excellent, as are the levels of investment entering inner cities through such schemes as “Excellence in Cities”. This has made a real impact upon pupils’ awareness, confidence and expectations and has had similar benefits for teachers and school communities.
- We know that leadership is the key to turning failing schools around. The proliferation of professional and academic courses for school leaders has served to raise standards of school leadership and is a real success. These award bearing courses recognise and accredit best practice in schools, conferring credibility and enhancing professionalism. The spread of such initiatives throughout the profession will serve to raise standards further. I would like to see experienced heads acting as consultants to heads struggling to lead schools in challenging contexts.
- League tables are now recognised as at best, of limited use. Parents in communities in my experience, are quite capable of making sophisticated judgments about local schools.
- Behaviour. There needs to be greater recognition of the difficulties arising from poor behaviour in schools. I welcome the recent change of heart at Government level, but I think it is quite wrong that schools should be penalised for permanent exclusions. Like most Heads, I recognise the role that effective teaching, positive ethos and constructive culture plays in promoting good behaviour, however, schools do need government support when dealing with unacceptable behaviour from anyone. My own recent experience with one parent included physical assault and death threats to members of staff, as part of a campaign to traumatise my school.
- As the 14 to 19 curriculum becomes more unified, what is the role for 11 to 16 schools? What role will the GCSE play in the future? The reality is that there is still much work to be done to improve knowledge skills and understanding among pupils who live in our most deprived communities. 11 to 16 schools achieve huge successes with individual children every day, but because of the emphasis on 5+ A\* to C grades and the reluctance of the establishment to accept vocational qualifications as having parity with GCSE, these achievements are often ignored. This results in pupils, teachers, schools and communities becoming demoralised.

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- The future. The future is truly exciting. Advances in our understanding of how we learn, communications, technology and leadership all combine to create opportunities for transformational change in our schools. In order to maximise the benefits for everyone, the country needs teachers to be involved in the think tanks and research groups working at the frontiers of knowledge. Schools and communities should cooperate and share expertise and understanding. Unfortunately, the competitive ethos encouraged by league tables, specialisms, and punitive measures such as “naming and shaming” actually work to diminish the potential benefits for our children.

*A Arnott*

*September 2002*

### **Memorandum from Ms Ruth Harker (EB 09)**

#### **1. EXCELLENCE IN CITIES: ADDRESSING SOCIAL INCLUSION**

1.1 Excellence in Cities is intended to support schools in addressing the problems of the major cities. Progress has been made. Despite support for the government’s education agenda and appreciation of the additional resources, there remain significant issues including staff recruitment, large numbers of disengaged or dispersed pupils, high student turn over, large numbers of pupils in the SEN register for learning and/or behavioural/emotional difficulties. These issues need a broader strategic approach.

1.2 In Birmingham as in other LEAs the EiC planning and the budget were largely devolved to the Headteachers. Whilst this was welcomed, it also required a significant amount of time out of school, especially in the first year of EiC.

1.3 Schools exist in an accountable society where they are increasingly subject to external scrutiny and Headteachers have long been aware of the need for accountability. Many schools have data which shows that targets have been met. At times, however, the emphasis on the measurable and verifiable masks the individual success stories which all schools could tell.

#### **2. EiC AT BOURNVILLE SCHOOL**

##### *2.1 The strands: Gifted and Talented Programme*

2.1.1 In 2001–02, 414 pupils from across the 11–16 age range received support through the school’s Gifted and Talented programme. This amounted to 32 per cent of the school roll. Analysis shows that the ethnic breakdown of these students reflects that of the school as a whole.

2.1.2 The programme has been a particularly successful aspect of our EiC work and evidence from schools in the South West EiC Partnership suggests that this is reflected across all the eighteen schools. It is intended to raise aspirations, particularly in relation to post-16 and post-18 education and raise standards, especially amongst the most able. It brings together Gifted and Talented pupils from across the school and on occasions from across several schools. All Year 10 G&T students from the 18 South West Schools attended a “Raising Achievement” evening. Many students visited universities and attended their residential. Many students attended school based extension classes. Staff also worked on extending learners in the classroom.

2.1.3 It is difficult to ascertain which of these strategies was the most effective but cumulatively at Bournville, there has been a significant impact. In 2002, an increased number of pupils achieved the higher (A\*, A and B) GCSE grades, an increased proportion of boys achieved 5+ A\*-C GCSE Grades (49 per cent in comparison with 47 per cent overall). From a position several years ago when we were below local post-16 continuing education rates we have made rapid progress and are now well over 70 per cent, in line with other 11–18 schools locally. This year an even higher proportion of students carried on with their education post-16 (which included over 50 per cent staying on into the school Sixth Form).

2.1.4 At local level, some G & T “clusters” have been more successful than others. Some staff found the additional work to be too much. Time out of school and the difficulties of cover are additional concerns.

##### *2.2 EiC Strand: Learning Mentors*

2.2.1 EiC funding along with other standards funds has allowed us to appoint a Learning Mentor and an Assistant Learning Mentor. They work from a Pupil Support Base (PSB), funded through EiC Year One funds, with additional support from school budget share. In 2001–02 Learning Mentors worked with 162 students mainly from years 8–11, (12.5 per cent of school roll). The largest group is white working class boys (46 per cent) a figure which reflects the preponderance of white working class boys in the school as a whole. Over 40 per cent of pupils who have received support are entitled to free school meals, which is proportionately more than the 25 per cent across the school.

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2.2.2 Learning Mentors often have a direct link with parents/carers and have provided practical help and advice for them on a range of family and social issues, going well beyond their brief. This is partly a result of the difficulties which affect Social Services which restrict their involvement to all but the most serious child protection cases. In 2001–02 there was a long period when we had had to pay for food and clothes for one homeless Year 11 girl (one parent in prison on drugs offences, the other, an alcoholic, threw her out without any clothes). We had to involve the Police. Despite our continuous efforts Social Services did not get involved for six months. During this time, the PSB became her “home”. Her attendance improved from around 50 per cent in Year 10 to 85 per cent in Year 11, she achieved a creditable set of GCSE results and despite being refused a college place, with support from Learning Mentors, she is now undertaking a course at the College of Food.

2.2.3 Individual students who are identified as having barriers to learning (social, physical, intellectual, cultural, emotional, behavioural for example) are offered additional support. This might take the form of:

- Carefully structured group work, aimed at rebuilding self confidence or improving social skills.
- Personal Development Workshops focusing on anger management, conflict resolution, bullying, self esteem or offending behaviour, Individual work, including counselling.

2.2.4 There is a focus on poor attenders. Comparatively high previous unauthorised absence rates are seen in students working through our Pupil Support Base. We use a standards fund to pay for a teacher to work with these students, bring them into school and support them through the reintegration process. A particular success in 2001–02 was a College Link course for disaffected KS4 students, with shared provision, school based mentoring and a great deal of personal development work. Although demonstrably successful, the practical difficulties and significant costs have led us to reduce the provision for the coming year.

2.2.5 The social inclusion agenda is of such importance that we have supplemented the EiC funds and created a new Assistant Headteacher post. Her brief is to develop a whole school—community approach. Schools alone can only make limited difference to the quality of life, self esteem and life chances of children in difficult and challenging circumstances, as there are usually much wider family issues.

### 2.3 *EiC strand: Learning Support Centres*

2.3.1 Headteachers from South West Birmingham Schools realised too late to do anything about the first Learning Support Centre in the network, that the £100,000 would provide a major resource for one individual school and possibly its community, but would provide little for the remaining seventeen schools. When the opportunity came to fund a second centre (albeit with half the money) we decided to do something different. The resulting partnership with two local Pupil Referral Units showed us the way forward. This success of this initiative was demonstrated when exclusions in the area fell dramatically. However, the initiative was stalled by pressure on the PRUs from exclusions from elsewhere. As a result, exclusions across the schools rose.

2.3.2 One initiative which is not supported by schools is the exclusion “dowry”. This is not because schools exclude “lightly”. School budget arrangements and especially the manner in which staffing is funded make it impossible to manage when one or two students are excluded. Despite the EiC funding budgets have not kept pace with inflation in real terms, the situation in many schools is very tight and the loss of several thousand when one or two students have to be excluded can cause real difficulties, despite taking excluded pupils from other schools.

### 2.4 *EiC Strands: City Learning Centres*

2.4.1 Headteachers from the EiC network planned the City Learning Centre based at Frankley High School. The focus is upon the technology curriculum. The high-tec equipment would not be affordable by the individual schools. There were some initial reservations about pupils having to travel some distance to it but it has developed into one of the most well used CLCs nationally.

2.4.2 In 2001–02, 228 students from Bournville used the CLC. This was the whole of our Year 9. Technology teachers spent time at the CLC planning lessons before taking the students to the CLC, teaching them and then following up the project work in school. Students found it motivating and they were able to plan and develop projects and use equipment which would not have been possible otherwise. The experience demonstrated the relevance of technology to today’s modern, high tec world and raised pupils’ expectations about the subject. The professional development for staff was also very evident.

2.4.3 The Headteachers’ Group receives regular reports allowing us to monitor the CLC use. These show that most, but not all schools in the network have used the CLC.

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### 2.5 Inclusion

2.5.1 Twenty eight pupils with varying degrees of visual impairment, some of whom are registered blind and have complex learning needs, are fully integrated into Bournville School and work alongside their sighted peers. The school has worked extremely hard to address a range of issues relating to inclusion. A Resource Base provides the expertise and facilities to support the children as they move through the school, enabling them to follow the National Curriculum. With training and support, teachers are able to include Visually Impaired pupils in their classrooms and even those who have been in Special Schools at the Primary Stage, generally achieve well. I am a member of the LEA's Strategic Management Group which plans and co-ordinates the provision for Visually Impaired pupils across the LEA.

2.5.2 Most Headteachers would support the aim of including as many pupils in mainstream schools as possible but this has to be balanced by the impact upon the rest of the school population from pupils who by definition are often severely disruptive and very demanding. The inclusion of significant numbers of pupils with an increasingly challenging range of behavioural and emotional difficulties is very different from including pupils with visual or hearing impairments or even speech and language problems. There appears to be a significant underestimation of the behaviour patterns presented by many of these pupils and their impact in the classroom and on the school. The difficulties cannot be resolved by short term training for teaching staff, adjustments in the classroom environment or some, usually limited, support from another adult.

2.5.3 There is no doubt that the inclusion agenda is at times, in conflict with the imperative to raise standards. There are some pupils whose behaviour and/or needs are such that inclusion in mainstream schools is not possible. We are all working in a climate where behaviour in general has got significantly worse (even reported as such by one of the local Grammar Schools in my Link Adviser visit). A significant number of parents are not supportive (condoned absence is the attendance issue which we cannot "crack"). Increasing numbers of parents resort to litigation as soon as a difficulty arises, often wasting hours and hours of senior staff and Headteachers' time). Despite training and intensive support, those staff who could just about cope with pupils whose behaviour was generally good, cannot cope under these circumstances, leading to resignation from some schools, and competency issues.

### 3. POST-16 DEVELOPMENTS: THE GREEN PAPER

3.1 11-18 schools in Birmingham established a School Sixth Form Partnership early in Autumn 2000. This includes the LEA. The partnership builds on a previous group which established a post-16 guarantee and looked at a range of funding models, but did not have a strategic role. Solihull 11-18 Schools joined the partnership in Spring 2001. The partnership has established a steering group, which I chair and which includes Head Teachers from a range of 11-18 schools in Birmingham and Solihull.

3.2 Even before the recent Area Wide Inspection, the partnership had begun to review existing provision and had started to identify the issues which will need to be addressed in the light of recent legislation. The group is developing a strategic role and a self review strategy. It has identified the need for shared planning in terms of the range of courses, resources and support for learners.

3.3 The Area Wide Inspection was very positive about Sixth Form teaching in Birmingham and Solihull. Currently approximately 50 per cent of students in the 16-19 range are in 11-18 schools locally. This is in line with the national figures of around 50 per cent of the post-16 cohort is educated in school sixth forms.

3.4 Curriculum 2000 was introduced in 1999-2000, although schools struggled without the additional funding. Most students in the schools are taking 'A' level courses, although some schools offer several GNVQ courses. The partnership has identified the need to expand the range of vocational courses offered within schools as well as across the area.

3.5 Students are achieving well across the partnership and retention rates compare well with national averages. Students in 11-18 schools obtained 18.2 average point score in 2001, close to the national figure of 18.7 in maintained schools nationally. This compares with 17.2 in Sixth Form Colleges and 14.8 in FE Colleges.

3.6 In Birmingham 14 11-18 schools have over 200 students, 19 have 100-200, 5 have 50-100 and 3 have below 50. In 2001-02, school sixth forms in Birmingham received £2,882, a figure which partly reflected the City Council's commitment to education but which also reflected the "disadvantage" factors in the city. The complexity of the funding and its impact on comparatively small institutions is a concern for Headteachers, despite the assurances which we have been given.

3.7 All schools operate some form of value added analysis. There are a number of collaborative arrangements in place to broaden opportunities. The Sutton Partnership links all schools to provide a wider range of options for the students. There is some collaboration between schools elsewhere, again broadening the range of courses offered to students and some schools have established links with other providers, including colleges in order to meet the needs of their students. Both OFSTED and the partnership identified the need to review and build upon existing links and to address the issue of cost effectiveness.

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3.8 A plan of action has been worked out with the LEA in terms of consulting with the CEO and LSC. Schools have attempted to prepare for funding convergence but there remain a number of uncertainties. It is not clear whether the LEA will have a strategic role apart from the partnership or will simply passport the funds to schools, although it is clear that LEAs will have to put bids into the LSC. It is also clear that there will be increased administration and other practical difficulties for schools when we have the LEA, the DfES, and the LSC to deal with.

3.9 The Partnership is now planning to use the existing Sixth Form Guarantee, one of several “Guarantees” within Birmingham LEA, as a basis for the development of a Quality Framework across the schools.

#### 4. BEACON SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

4.1 In September 2000, Bournville became the first co-educational school in Birmingham to become a Beacon School, the only other Beacon Schools at the time were girls only selective schools—a situation which remained until this term. This is one area where Birmingham LEA has had comparatively little involvement although this might change now Colmers Farm School, an 11–16 co-educational comprehensive and Selly Park Technology College for Girls have been awarded Beacon Status.

4.2 When the DfES first invited us to apply for Beacon Status in 1999, I was dubious about the whole initiative and declined the offer. We were invited again in 2000 and decided to make an application. We were already receiving many requests for visits and decided that the beacon funding would help offset costs.

4.3 It was the concept which concerned me and to a certain extent it still does. There are two aspects to this.

- Until fairly recently the data and research has highlighted the differences between schools. There is, however, increasing evidence that the differences within schools are at least as great as the difference between schools. There are few schools which are uniformly good—or for that matter—uniformly poor. As a Beacon School we have many strengths however, these areas can fluctuate—the head of an excellent department and his or her staff are likely to gain promotion. With the current staff shortage our staff are very likely to get the jobs they apply for. Some have even been contacted directly by other schools before making an application.
- As a school we have learned a great deal about school improvement. There are few quick fixes. It is clear that some colleagues from other schools gain a great deal from visiting us—we often learn from them as well—but change certainly does not happen overnight. It concerns me that on occasions we are visited by colleagues from other schools who look at something which works for us and take it away with them, however, without the ongoing professional development, commitment from other staff or a whole raft of other supportive conditions, improvement is not guaranteed.

4.4 There are, however, circumstances where our work as a Beacon School has clearly made a difference to others, as a research project by Warwick University is about to demonstrate. The LEA encouraged us to work with and support George Dixon International school. It had been in difficulties for some time and the LEA appointed a new Headteacher and was providing a range of support for it. It was in difficulty with its curriculum. After an initial meeting with senior staff from the school we have continued to offer practical help and support for a new curriculum model and timetable, including new subjects. Most recently this has resulted in pupils from the two schools working on a joint Business Studies tendering project with National Westminster Bank.

#### 5. THE LITERACY STRATEGY

5.1 There have always been concerns over the standard of children’s literacy and literacy has long been a priority in Birmingham as it has been at Bournville school, given the predominance of boys and the “creaming off” of girls.

5.2 When I first went to Bournville School in 1996 it was clearly underachieving. I wanted to establish the potential of the intake and to identify where we needed to focus our improvement efforts. At that time SATs were not well established as secure predictors of GCSE attainment. KS2-3 baseline data was patchy and we struggled to collect the data from the 40+ feeder schools. I introduced the NFER Cognitive Ability, Literacy and Numeracy tests which we have continued to use as baseline data since then.

5.3 In 1997 the LEA invited us to join a cross phase, cross city Literacy Task Group. We had identified literacy as a priority. The Task Group developed a transition KS2-3 module, “Moving on Up”, designed to introduce pupils to the literacy demands of the secondary curriculum. Like the more recent national transition modules take up was patchy across the LEA. However, at Bournville, we went on to develop it further. Due for revision this year, the project forms the centre of a week long induction programme for new pupils.

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5.4 Although the National Literacy Strategy has been a demonstrable success, in many ways, its potential has not been fully realised. It was introduced far too quickly, resulting in teachers not having the time to really get to grips with it and explore its potential. At secondary level at least, in practice it is centred upon English departments. Ironically, the work of Lewis and Bray, upon which much of it is based, was aimed at helping children to read (and write) across the curriculum).

5.5 Over the last five years or so, we have developed our understanding of the link between language and learning. We started by looking at language and used the Lewis and Bray EXEL (Extending Interactions with Texts) Project at Exeter University to help staff understand the writing demands of the curriculum. We created a "Language for Learning" pupils' booklet, which teachers used as an aid to guide them through the language of the secondary curriculum and developed a range of both "integrated" and discrete literacy programmes. For the last two years, one of the main areas of our work as a Beacon School has been in sharing our approach to literacy development.

5.6 Once we started to focus upon language, we realised how inextricably linked language and thought are. If we want young people to progress at KS3 and beyond, they must be able to use the higher order thinking skills. Focusing upon literacy or texts without helping young people to understand, access and use the thinking skills needed to gain access the higher levels of the curriculum at each key stage, is likely to restrict their development and achievement.

5.7 Across the LEA there is evidence to show that the KS2 Literacy Strategy has made a difference, our intake at Bournville has improved. But there also seems to be a cost. Cognitive ability tests show certain cognitive skills (especially non-verbal and listening skills) have improved relatively little. Overall the improvement in our intake as assessed by the NFER Tests is not as great as would be implied by the SAT results.

5.8 Our focus at Bournville has moved from "Language for Learning" to "Language for Thinking and Learning". Staff were convinced when we undertook an analysis of the GCSE and A level question papers. Almost regardless of subject discipline, success at the highest levels required pupils to use the higher order skills: evaluation, synthesis, hypothesising. Whilst they have much in common different ways of thinking are also determined by the subject itself. Our "Language for Thinking and Learning" programme also introduces pupils (and staff) into the ways of thinking of each subject "discipline". Students are taught the language of the curriculum and the language of examinations.

5.9 There is a great deal of interest in thinking skills in the LEA. Tim Brighouse has a passionate interest in learning and he has brought leading international speakers to the city. He has personally encouraged our work at Bournville as he has done in all the schools. As a result, our staff have made contributions to major conferences and other INSET sessions, developing their professionalism, their confidence and their self esteem.

## 6. IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING

6.1 The improvement of teaching and learning has been a major priority for Birmingham LEA since Tim Brighouse arrived.

6.2 Historically, most teaching has been undertaken by those who were best at the subject, but that person may not be skilled in the principles of teaching. In the last ten to fifteen years, psychologists have begun to discover more of how the brain really works. Dozens of universities, research psychologists and educators have contributed to the body of research. Psychologists have begun to define the principles behind learning and leading multi-national companies as well as schools are using strategies loosely called "accelerated learning" in order to present information in new ways that actively involve both the left and the right brains. Howard Gardner's work has been seminal. His studies into children's aptitudes and intelligence have been used to show how ill suited our natural patterns of learning are to current educational materials and practice. Tim Brighouse has taken much interest in his work and he has made this accessible to us in Birmingham partly through his video link ups with him. Other leaders in the field, including Daniel Goleman have challenged our thinking about intelligence.

6.3 The emphasis at Bournville has been upon updating teachers, many of whom were trained before current thinking developed and translating new knowledge about learning into classroom strategies. Work is being done to help pupils to understand the different ways in which they learn. Through the curriculum and our Key Skills programme pupils:

- analyse their preferred learning
- learn about the language of learning
- learn about how they learn
- are shown how they might use this knowledge to support their own learning
- are taught about the language of the curriculum and examinations
- are prepared for and involved in target setting.

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6.4 Pupils are taught thinking skills. Thinking skills started when we looked closely at where children were having difficulties with the curriculum. Thinking skills:

- Developed within the subject disciplines
- Provide a framework to help learners understand their learning
- Move learners on and up in their learning
- Are inextricably linked with language
- Require self knowledge—emotional intelligence
- Include strategies such Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic learning and memory skills
- Help learners make links across their learning
- Help learners plan and evaluate their learning

This is also about changing the way we teach.

## 7. THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, CONFIDENCE AND SELF ESTEEM OF STAFF

7.1 In the early phase of our improvement programme at Bournville, members of Birmingham's Advisory and Support service worked with some departments and some individual members of staff to help them move forwards.

7.2 In recent years, an extensive, school based programme has been designed to move the whole staff forward together in order to develop a shared understanding of effective teaching and learning. The wide ranging programme has enabled departmental teams to focus on areas of learning within their subject disciplines, whilst providing opportunities for staff to extend their learning to cross curricular and interdisciplinary issues. Much of this work has already been shared with local schools. Colleagues have become confident and competent INSET providers. Many have led workshops within the school and have shared their work with colleagues from across the LEA and beyond.

7.3 This (or any other) strategy would not be successful if we were not able to send staff out of the school to attend key conferences and courses and visit other schools. The quality of supply staff limits this.

7.4 I fully support the strategy of providing enhanced support to schools in challenging circumstances. As a "light touch" school, we receive only a limited amount of advisory support from the LEA. The Birmingham Advisory and Support Service (BASS) initiative, introduced last year, of using Headteachers to act as Link Advisers, has been extremely successful. I act as a Link Adviser for one of the Grammar Schools and a Headteacher from an inner city school acts as my Adviser, the process is supported by the LEA. It is constructive, challenging and supportive and I know that it is valued by all those involved.

## 8. THE COLLEGIATE

8.1 This year, Bournville was one of six schools from South West Birmingham to form The Oaks Collegiate Academy.

- Bournville School—Beacon/Specialist Business Enterprise
- Dame Elizabeth Cadbury—Technology
- Frankley Community School
- Harborne Hill School
- Lordswood Boys
- Selly Oak Special School—Beacon

The concept is that of a confederation, with each maintaining and developing its own identity.

8.2 The concept stems from Tim Brighouse. It has now become one of the DfES Pathfinder projects and is partly funded by them. In the South West of the City, six Headteachers came together within our EiC Partnership, a strong partnership of eighteen schools in the South West of Birmingham. Bournville and Dame Elizabeth Cadbury already had a long standing post-16 partnerships. All schools believe we all have things to offer and to learn. We have a belief in a city wide view of entitlement. We are committed to working together and believe there will be strength in numbers to tackle the issues and problems evident in some communities. There are schools in very different circumstances and with very different pupil populations and a range of communities will be supported by the collegiate.

The aim is high expectations and raised standards for all schools, by is to broadening learning opportunities, extending the learning experiences of students and sharing approaches, resources and practice. Ultimately there will be a wider choice of learning routes and experiences for our students. Out of hours learning will be available.

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MINUTES OF EVIDENCE TAKEN BEFORE

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8.3 We have appointed a Collegiate Co-ordinator who is managing our shared INSET programme. We are currently working on developing and sharing the best practice. The confederation will also enable us to meet the 14–19 agenda more effectively. Commitments for Year 1 include:

- Shared CPD time slots
- Joint Training Day 2002–03, others to follow
- Collegiate web site including most of the existing curriculum
- ICT INSET for subject departments
- Management by a Board of Heads
- Identified link Governors
- Two Advanced Skills Teachers and one Consultant working across Science, Mathematics and ICT Departments.

8.4 There will be additional funding for the next 3 years  
\* DfES—£100k for collegiate use

- 0.5 per cent of budget share from each school
- Funding from the Gatsby Foundation for 3 ASTs
- Funding for Chamberlain Scholarships for students
- April 2003 delegated ESW & Educational Psychologist funding
- Other possible delegated funds in the future

8.5 We are planning:

- A curriculum which can be accessed by all schools
- Joint curriculum development through a collegiate week/day
- Common curriculum patterns
- Common schemes of work at KS3
- A home-base approach with possible moves at KS4
- The collegiate will offer additional opportunities for staff, including the opportunity to become an Advanced Skills teacher and work across the schools

8.6 We have not committed ourselves to

- Common admissions
- Staffing transfers to the collegiate
- Common Governance
- A common budget

8.7 Individual schools can not make enough difference on their own. This is one reason for my involvement in The Collegiate. Even so, this will need strategic support for what are often isolated areas and complex issues, going well beyond the boundaries of individual schools or even groups of schools.

*Ruth Harker*

*September 2002*

### **Memorandum from Mrs Christine Owen (EB 10)**

#### **1. BARTLEY GREEN TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE—CONTEXT**

1.1 Bartley Green Technology College is an 11–16 mixed secondary school, with some 820 pupils on roll, many of whom come from homes with a significant degree of social and economic deprivation (42–46 per cent FSM). The school contains within it, a Special Education Unit for 55 statemented pupils, with Speech and Language difficulties, many of whom are on the Autistic Spectrum. In addition, a further 36–42 per cent have special educational needs, with another 20 pupils having Statements of SEN in mainstream. Thus, nearly 10 per cent of the school population is statemented and another third on various stages of the Code of Practice. Seven years ago, the school was severely underperforming and was identified as “nearly failing” by Ofsted.

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	<i>Then 1994</i>	<i>Now 2002</i>
1st Choices	73	258 (150 intake)
5+ A-Cs	11%	35%
5+ A-Es	46%	74%
5+ A-Gs	74%	94%
1+ GCSE	88%	99%
No results	12%	1%
Attendance	84%	92%
SATS Benchmarking	All Es	BCAB

My school is measured by the same outputs as King Edward's Grammar School up the road, although most of my pupils have very different starting points. Despite this, our attainment has improved significantly, as has that of pupils with SEN (See Annex 1). However, League Tables take no account of these differing starting points—which continues to rankle with teachers, as it is blatantly unfair. It also fails to recognise the enormous achievement of teachers of these pupils, in some challenging schools—to achieve this much. Teaching and Learning in schools achieving success in challenging circumstances is often, of necessity, more varied, stimulating and targeted than some schools in more advantageous circumstances. Statements from the Government berating low achieving schools undermine those working hard and succeeding in some very difficult social and economic contexts. It also makes staff recruitment much, much harder.

## 2. ATTENDANCE

2.1 Attendance is of course, closely correlated with academic success. Standards Fund and EiC support here is crucial and most welcome. Most secondary schools have used this effectively to raise attendance through the appointment of dedicated attendance support staff.

2.2 Parental condoned absence is the critical issue, not “truancy” in the majority of cases. “Unauthorised absence” league tables and “penalty” approach self-defeating. Schools need to challenge some parents over condoned absence by refusing to authorise it.

2.3 Struggling schools in challenging circumstances are further disadvantaged by having spare capacity, which enables other more successful schools, ESWs and LEAs to “dump” very challenging pupils (either through extended periods of absence—a year or more missed schooling, or with severe behavioural difficulties). Such pupils require intervention before being placed back in schools, similar to BSS model operating in Birmingham. Schools in such circumstances need to be protected from direction to take such pupils or the strains may well break the camel's back!

## 3. BEHAVIOUR

3.1 Poor behaviour is always an issue in schools facing challenging circumstances. Schools used to be able to rely on a high degree of consensus about appropriate behaviour in schools. They were, in the main, agencies of “secondary socialisation”. Now often, they have to put enormous resources into “primary socialisation”, honesty, politeness, non-physical responses, appropriate language, responses and behaviour.

3.2 Recent evidence from a survey amongst Birmingham Headteachers revealed the following:

- Behaviour has improved slightly for the majority due to huge staff investment—thanks largely to EiC, but the extremes are more extreme. More support is required for a minority of pupils who present more challenging and complex behaviours, some require a different educational environment, more specialised.
- Increased difficulty in unstructured time and with issues coming into school from the community.
- More pupils are presenting problems on entry from KS2.
- Impact of unsupportive/hostile parents on workload and morale of staff.
- Violent behaviour on increase, involving both physical and verbal assaults on pupils and staff.
- Staff recruitment issues in challenging schools and/or increased staff absence.
- Increased emphasis on “rights” not “responsibilities”.
- Inclusion policy re pupils with behaviour problems presents schools with enormous difficulties.
- Increased moves to litigation, often over trivial issues, which often come to nothing, absorb unreasonable amounts of staff time and energy.

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- Schools have put in an awe-inspiring range of strategies to manage and improve behaviour.
  - Penalty clause for exclusions deeply resented. If a pupil assaults another pupil on racial grounds, school will still suffer £6,000 penalty for exclusion.
  - More Behaviour Support Service input and Child Psychiatric services required.
- One Head said—

“It is the single most important issue deterring undergraduates from entering the profession—not salaries, not paperwork, curriculum change nor Ofsted. Grappling with poor behaviour is also wearing down an aging profession.”

#### 4. SPECIALIST SCHOOLS

4.1 Bartley Green was working towards applying for Specialist School status prior to EiC, but this initiative enabled us to apply sooner.

The vigorous planning and setting of the school's own identified priorities and targets, is a very effective tool for continued school improvement. Our own progress has been hastened by this sharp focus, with the additional resources to support higher achievement and more challenging targets. The Technology Colleges Trust is an important network for ideas and support. The programme of support for Specialist Schools in challenging areas has been a welcome addition in my own school's Science Department for example.

4.2 The requirement for £50,000 sponsorship from business and the community is a huge barrier to schools already disadvantaged in terms of their catchment. We only raised £5,000 despite extensive efforts. We were so fortunate in gaining support through TCT special EiC funding and through the TCT's contact with an anonymous donor. The issue of sponsorships, for schools in challenging circumstances, needs to be addressed.

4.3 The Community aspect of the Specialist Schools programme is particularly effective. In my own school for example, local primaries share our difficult community context. The requirement to share resources with our community has benefited six feeder primaries both in terms of resources, ICT support, curriculum support and expertise and enrichment for able Year 6 pupils.

4.4 Clearly too, there is an issue for schools who do not achieve such status when others all around them do. Such schools are likely to be facing immense challenges anyway. Justice and equality of opportunity for children suggests that such schools require much more support in order to compete and gain the additional resourcing and access to improvement strategies that would bring them into the “virtuous circle”.

#### 5. ADMINISTRATION, BUREAUCRACY AND WORKLOAD ISSUES

5.1 It is frustrating, that despite the Government's avowed intent to reduce bureaucratic demands, both Government Agencies and LEAs continue to demand increased paperwork, often in the name of “monitoring and evaluation”. Here in school, it sometimes feels as if I am the only person digging the hole, whilst ten others assess and monitor my performance. I would like some of them to grab a shovel too! In the first week of term, we received three different requests from the LEA, one ten pages long, requiring detailed information and examples. If this level of monitoring is required, we will have to build an additional administrative cost into our budgets to meet this demand. Do I have one person employed full-time for example to monitor our SEN budget and to evaluate its effect in detail on individual pupils and groups? How useful will this be, when those pupils are also subject to a myriad of other influences and strategies, EiC Learning Mentors, Behaviour Support Workers, Attendance Workers etc?

5.2 The approach of EiC and that used for Pupil Learning Credits is a huge relief. Set the parameters, give us the funding, and let us do the job, “minimalist” bureaucracy. Accountability and responsibility for outcomes of course, but “light touch” paperwork.

5.3 Clearly, there is likely to be an increasingly heavy administrative load being borne at the school level, not least because of the delegation of functions previously performed at LEA level. However, the delegation of administrative resources to undertake these functions has not always followed. The Government's recognition of this need to develop administrative infrastructures is welcome, but will need to be costed, if the risk of teachers being drawn away from the classroom and disputes over teacher workload are to be avoided.

5.4 Concerns over the continual introduction of additional hoops for schools to jump through, apparently because of fears that some schools may not be acting properly. These also distract Governing Bodies from their prime functions.

5.5 CRB fiasco prime example of a lack of understanding of how schools work on the ground. (Why cannot GTC take over responsibility for liaising with CRB over this—one point of contact for schools re registered teachers?)

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## 6. 14–19 CURRICULUM

6.1 Increased flexibility is to be greatly welcomed. We have a variety of youngsters now undertaking part-time or shared provision with local FE colleges.

6.2 However, such arrangements are not made easily and require very specific arrangements for specific schools. Issues of transport of pupils to and from, safety etc are often neglected issues.

6.3 Interestingly, issues of who should enter pupils for external accreditation are coming to the fore. Both schools and colleges want the accreditation—but whilst League Tables are prominent, I know where my pupils will do their examinations!

6.4 The schizophrenic approach to annual GCSE/A Level results is very depressing. I know how much work goes into those improved results; far, far more and far more effectively than twenty years ago. In addition, the concentration on \*A-Cs undervalues the well-earned success of those achieving Ds, Es, Fs, and for some SEN pupils, a G! There needs to be a way in which the unskilled and semi-skilled workforce of the future can feel properly valued.

6.5 I await with anticipation, the additional support for my “at risk” 16 year old leavers, a significant number in a school like mine, when Connexions has reorganised sufficiently to make a real difference on the ground. It is particularly frustrating to work really hard to persuade pupils to apply for college/6th forms, support them by visits, form filling, telephone calls, parental contact, to find them wandering back into school after a few weeks having abandoned post-16 courses because then didn't like them. Real support is required at this transition point from someone other than us. 11–16 pupils, usually already in a more socially disadvantaged area, are further disadvantaged by having to make a real decision at 16. Their counterparts in an 11–18 school can just drift into 6th form with very little effort and continue to receive the support of staff who know them well. Thus they have more time to make mature decisions about suitable progression.

C F Owen

September 2002

## Annex 1

## GCSE RESULTS 1995–2002

Full Year Group	Entered	Achieved	Achieved	Achieved	Entered	Achieved	Achieved	Average No Passes Point Score	No Passes A*-G	Not entered	
	5+ GCSE	5+ A*-C	5+ A*-E	5+ A*-G	1+ GCSE	1+ A*-C	1+ A*-G				
1995	117	100 85%	17 15%	54 46%	86 74%	113 97%	107 91%		10 9%	4 3%	
1996	131	116 89%	20 15%	74 56%	109 83%	129 98%	127 97%		4 3%	2 2%	
1997	102	91 89%	20 20%	59 58%	85 83%	98 96%	98 96%		4 4%	4 4%	
1998	109	91 83%	21 19%	62 57%	86 79%	105 96%	104 95%		5 5%	4 4%	
1999	103	95 92%	20 19%	53 51%	90 87%	102 99%	101 98%		2 2%	1 1%	
2000	116	110 95%	33 28%	73 63%	107 92%	113 97%	113 97%	30.3	3 3%	3 3%	
2001	118	111 94%	36 31%	79 67%	108 92%	117 99%	64 54%	117 99%	30.1	1 1%	1 1%
2002	124	120 97%	44 35%	92 74%	117 94%	124 100%	85 69%	123 99%	35.5	1 1%	0 0%
Rend 1994–2001		Up 12%	Up 20%	Up 28%	Up 20%	Up 3%	Up 15%	Up 8%	Up 5.2	Down 8%	Down 3%

All pupils aged 15+ on School Roll.

All figures are rounded to the nearest whole number.

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**Bartley Green Technology College****SPEECH AND LANGUAGE RESOURCE BASE**

The Resource Base works with 55 pupils with Statements of Special Need, focused on speech and language handicaps, including pupils on the autistic spectrum, Asperger's syndrome, and semantic-pragmatic difficulties.

With BGTC this is one of the most extensive inclusive secondary resources nationally.

It is oversubscribed, and with the popularity of the Technology College as a whole, indicates that client parents find the inclusive nature of the school environment a positive factor for choosing us.

The move from a school integrating special needs pupils to an inclusive school setting in which all pupils are valued was a conscious process which the Head and the Resource Base Head have worked together to achieve over the past few years.

It is the expectation now that all pupils with speech and language difficulties will be encouraged both socially and academically so that they are able to access the same exam accreditation at the end of Year 11.

In the Year cohort that left in July 2002, all the pupils (seven in the group) achieved significant results. A total of 42 GCSE and GNVQs were passed. The subject range included: Art, English Language, English Literature, Food Technology, French, Graphic Products, History, Mathematics, Science (Single and Double GCSE) GNVQ Manufacturing, and Textiles.

Pupils also achieved ICT (Short course) accreditation, modular French, and Alternative English (Merit).

The work of the Technology College as an inclusive environment has been highlighted by AFASIC, in two OFSTED inspections, and by a number of Universities. It is the lead establishment for a Eu Socrates-Comenius II Project: SENTRA—Special Educational Needs: Transitions, viewable on a dedicated website at [www.sentra.ws](http://www.sentra.ws).

There is a fundamental issue that if establishments such as BGTC are going to flourish as inclusive environments, then there needs to be some tangible recognition of this within the Government's reporting framework additional to examination grade levels alone.

There appears to be no record and research data for the achievement of pupils with special needs in inclusive mainstream settings.

**Examination of Witnesses**

MR ANDREW ARNOTT, Headteacher, Stockland Green School, MRS RUTH HARKER, Headteacher, Bournville School and Sixth Form Centre, and MRS CHRISTINE OWEN, Headteacher, Bartley Green Technology College, were examined.

**Chairman**

110. Can I welcome Andrew Arnott, Ruth Harker and Christine Owen to our deliberations. You will know that this is quite a special occasion for us because we very rarely hold formal sessions outside the Houses of Parliament. We did in Paris at the OECD in March; we did something like 18 months ago in Oxford in our *Early Years* inquiry, but we are here in Birmingham for a week. We are trying to understand the education system in this largest city in Europe under one government if you like, and we are here because it is a much improved city in education terms but it is also a city facing many challenges. We thought the combination of meeting as many people as we could and visiting as many schools as we could across a whole range would be of enormous help to us. Some of us were saying today when we came back from our most recent visit that we are beginning to get a sense of the city and its educational service. I think we are getting there but we have been looking forward particularly to meeting three heads who have such a wealth of experience. I know that all of three of you have taught in other schools in the city and have wide experience. Will you forgive us because some of the questions we ask you will seem quite naive to people who have been in Birmingham

a long time. None of us is from Birmingham. We cover all the political parties and we are from very different parts of the country. We have just started our inquiry into secondary education and we are looking at secondary education across the piste and so some of the things we will be asking you are to inform our broader inquiry. One of the things that is of particular interest to us is this diversity agenda that the Government has, the view that if you have specialist schools and city academies and foundation schools and so on—and there are many ways now to be a different and diverse institution—in some way this will liberate the abilities of schools to deliver higher standards and better achievement for pupils. We are very keen to look at that in the first phase of our inquiry. I wonder what you think of this diversity argument. Have all three of you been involved in specialist schools? I know two of you certainly have.

(*Mr Arnott*) We have applied to become a specialist school and we have had our outline bid accepted by the city, so it has got their stamp of approval on it. They have organised this latest round of applications which they will support and put forward to the DFES in phases. I think I have been at my school the shortest of the three of us and when I went there I found that it was weak in technology

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subjects and that was why I wanted to go for technology college status, as a means of raising standards in those subjects. We have had our bid accepted and the city is going to sponsor that bid in September 2003 to March 2004. We have to have it in by March 2004. We are a school that is not a specialist school but we want to become one because we think it will help lever up standards of teaching in the school.

111. What do you think the specialist schools innovation is doing for education in Birmingham?

*(Mrs Owen)* Perhaps I could answer that because on the map you will see that Bartley Green is actually one of these outer most deprived areas. It stands out on its own alongside the inner city.

112. Where are you?

*(Mrs Owen)* Bartley Green, in the bottom left hand maroon bit. When I went to Bartley Green it was a nearly failing school, being warned by HMI etc. For us, therefore, having lifted ourselves out of any threat from OFSTED of serious weakness, etc, we saw it as a way of maintaining our improvement and of really having quite a tight boundary framework but also getting additional resources to help us. I have put in my submission that what I think it is particularly good about things like the specialist schools movement is that you set your targets, you decide what you are going for, and they are challenging and you have to meet them, but then you do get some additional resources to help you. I have also pointed out that there are several disadvantages of course for schools generally in the diversity agenda. First, to raise £50,000 for sponsorship would have been impossible in my area. We raised £5,000 and went all out. If it was not that the Technology Colleges Trust found me an anonymous donor and also had a pot of money, I guess from the Government, to sponsor the EIC schools, we would not have stood a chance and that is unfair because schools in these circumstances do not have access to that sort of sponsorship. The other issue is, like for Andy, okay, 2004 but that is quite a way down the road. What happens to those schools who are not special in any way? I do feel that something will have to be done about those schools because usually they are in the most challenging circumstances where they are fighting to hold the line and improve and then everybody else is getting this leg up and they are still trying to maintain their standards and are probably being berated for not having made more progress too. I think the principle is a liberating one if there is also more support to those who need it.

*(Mrs Harker)* We have just been awarded specialist school status. From September we are one of the first Business Enterprise colleges nationally, so in a sense I know what it is like not to be a specialist school. We have been affiliated to the Technology Colleges Trust for many years though and that is partly because I have always seen that as a very innovative organisation and have attended conferences and found that to be very helpful to the school. However, I think there is a tendency that schools only become affiliated simply because they want to become specialist schools. I think myself that in the early days of specialist schools the requirement to have partner schools was not exactly a paper exercise but it was not given as much importance as it is now. We have

got two partner secondary schools, one the George Dixon International School which I think you visited, which has had very troubled times, and Harborne Hill which has had equally troubled times. Having bid in recent months, we have put a great deal of thought into the way that we are going to work together. Indeed, the partnership, certainly with George Dixon, goes back way beyond our application. I think that there was and is a danger that those schools who currently are not in a position to bid remain at a disadvantage because there is an advantage in the funding and all the other things. There is no doubt about that: the funding is very important. I do think that the recent emphasis on that partnership is the right way to do it. The two schools that have come into partnership with us have done so because they think that by being in partnership standards in those schools will rise significantly, as we think ours will as well, but ultimately they want to become specialist schools as well. Having said that, we will learn from them even though they are in perhaps more challenging circumstances than we are. That actually brings a special sort of experience which I think we can benefit from.

*(Mr Arnott)* On my note I have made a point about the hierarchy of secondary schools as my third bullet point. The problem with levels of diversity is that, as Ruth has implied, there are winners and losers. The losers tend to be schools that are struggling and either cannot raise the sponsorship or they have other barriers in front of them. When Chris was explaining her background at Bartley Green, we are in a very similar position. I have been at my school 18 months, a school that was identified as a failing school and we had to bring round. One of the things to do with diversity is the Secretary of State's recent comments about the hierarchy of secondary schools. The intention as far as I understand it is to offer less prescription to schools that are higher up the pecking order, the specialist schools, but not to schools that are seen to be lower down the pecking order, and we are a school facing challenging circumstances which is right at the bottom; I think we are one of the 300 schools in the country that achieved less than 15 per cent five A\*-Cs this summer. It seems to me, and I have put it in here, that it does seem a little perverse that it is schools that are really struggling to build and rebuild and improve and who are tackling really major issues that are not given the opportunity to diversify and be innovative in the curriculum with their method of teaching. Having said that, it is infinitely better now and getting better than it was in the early days of national curriculum in the late eighties and early nineties when it was so prescribed that there was very little room for innovation or individuality at all.

*(Mrs Harker)* What about beacon schools? Do you include those in your diversity?

113. Yes.

*(Mrs Harker)* We are a beacon school. Until this term we were the only co-educational beacon school in Birmingham, the others being selective girls' schools. We were invited to apply for beacon status in 1999. We actually declined to do that partly because I had a problem with the concept, and to a certain extent I still do.

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[Continued

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114. Why is that?

(Mrs Harker) Because I think that it is built on the basis that the data identifies the differences between schools. I think there is increasing evidence that the greatest differences lie within schools and although a school like my own can be identified as being particularly effective, I know as a headteacher that there are some areas which are less effective. Obviously schools are constantly changing and there is this implication that if you are not eligible to be a beacon school you have not got strengths. That is absolutely not the case. Even schools in very challenging circumstances, sometimes schools with serious weaknesses, have a very strong department here or there and particular strengths and I do think that it is very difficult. To be quite honest, when we were invited again to be a beacon school the following year, we were already receiving quite a lot of visitors and we decided that we might as well get the funding to support that. It is also to do with the issue of how schools change. There is evidence that some of the schools that we have worked with have benefited from that and I think the George Dixon school is one of those.

115. Benefited from what?

(Mrs Harker) From working with us as a beacon school. There is no doubt about that. George Dixon School has completely re-written their curriculum and timetable as a result of working with us and that I think is helping the school. There are clearly other ways in which schools which have visited us have benefited, and we have obviously learned from visitors who come to see us anyway. At the same time there are no quick fixes and coming into a school and seeing a good idea might or might not work back in the home school. It is a lot to do with the conditions in that school and that is something that is quite difficult for us to influence simply from one-off links with schools.

**Mr Chaytor**

116. This is a question in particular to Andrew. In respect of the question of diversity and hierarchy, looking at Birmingham specifically, what are the three things that you think ought to be done to reduce the degree of hierarchy of schools in Birmingham?

(Mr Arnott) The first and most important one has been done. When Professor Tim Brighouse told heads last year that he wanted every school in Birmingham to eventually become a specialist school, that immediately lifted schools that were struggling and certainly it gave me hope in my role of bringing a school on and trying to build morale and improve things in there. That is the first thing. Rather than three things, I think it is support, all sorts of support, certainly for schools in challenging circumstances, and I have mentioned this a couple of times in my memorandum. In the last few years we have had a punitive system which has been based on punishing schools that are under achieving. All three of us have experience of working in very challenging schools and schools do not consciously set out to under achieve. As Ruth said, we have lots of different people in there and strengths and weaknesses within our schools, and schools develop and change

radically. The key thing I think is to say that all schools can achieve this if they want to, and certainly the role of specialist schools is a major lever for improvement, partly because it attracts resources and partly because again it lifts the morale of pupils, teachers and the community as well. Our community in Stockland Green, to be honest with you, has very little going for it. We work quite closely with the community. We have a lot of support as we are working in our build-up towards going for specialist school status. A lot of our parents and our partners think it is quite special because of the word "special". This is something that they are all for and that they support. Raising the expectations of everybody, giving everybody the chance to feel that they can achieve and supporting all schools—those are the key things.

117. I would like to put a question to Ruth who in her submission referred to the area inspection recently.

(Mrs Harker) The post-16 one, yes.

118. That is an area I am interested in. Can you tell us what the essence of the conclusions of the area inspection was? Later we might want to ask for a copy of it.

(Mrs Harker) The area wide inspection looked at provision in the schools and colleges and the training providers as well as focusing on post-16. In relation to schools, one of the main conclusions was that actually schools were doing pretty well. The key issues relating to schools though were that we need to work more closely with the community in terms of addressing the local needs, perhaps looking more at the diversity of courses. Schools still tend to be fairly narrow in the curriculum, generally offering the traditional AS/A level routes, and that is not appropriate for all. We had picked that up as a group of schools anyway but certainly that was one of the main findings. It was less conclusive about take-up rates. In relation to the 11–18 schools, the post-16 take-up rate is pretty good and it is actually very close to the national average. The difficulty comes in the 11–16 schools where it dips, and so one of the conclusions was working much more closely in networks and partnerships 14–19 to try and bridge what can be a bit of a barrier at that 16 age level at the end of Key Stage 4.

119. You specifically mention in your report that there are five schools currently with sixth forms of 50–100 pupils and three with sixth forms of below 50.

(Mrs Harker) Yes.

120. Do you think that with those kinds of numbers it is seriously possible to provide a broad and balanced curriculum?

(Mrs Harker) No.

121. So what should happen?

(Mrs Harker) Some sixth forms may have to close, some of the very small ones. However, this is where working more closely with colleges and networks of schools is important. We have to stop thinking in terms of the walls which separate us from the next institution. We are being encouraged and are on the ground working in partnerships. We have started to speak to our local sixth form and FE colleges, some of us for the first time, and work out a plan for the

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local area. That is tough because the practicalities get in the way very often but nevertheless I think heads in all of those schools, and even in the much bigger sixth forms which are still comparatively small when you compare them, say, to the range in an FE college, have to make sure that within the patch we are offering a diverse choice post 16.

122. I would like to follow on with one question to Christine which is building on that. Do I take it that all Birmingham schools are now part of a collegiate?  
(Mrs Owen) No.

123. Could you explain how the concept is working? Is it funding in certain areas of the city?

(Mrs Owen) The schools have opted into it. Ruth and I are both in the same EIC network and Ruth and a group of six schools have joined together to become this collegiate.

124. How big is this EIC network?

(Mrs Owen) We have nearly 20 schools. We are bigger than many local authorities and that includes special schools, 11–18, 11–16, single sex and mixed schools. It is quite a broad range of social context too.

125. And it is a matter of choice within each EIC network as to whether you form a collegiate?

(Mrs Owen) Yes. Some of them were not based on the networks, I do not think.

(Mrs Harker) I think they are actually. There are three collegiates. We are what you might call pilot projects. To a certain extent it is Tim Brighouse's brainchild. He spoke to all heads about the concept and moulded the ideas. It has been largely driven by him, he is very committed to it. In the end three groups of schools from within the EIC networks got together in time to say, "Yes, we would like to go for it". The one to which I belong is the only one which is working in what he calls a "closely coupled" operation although at the moment there is not a lot of difference between the ways in which the other two collegiates are working. Going back to the difficulties about the divergence, for me opting into a collegiate is one of the ways in which we can provide a more equitable provision across a range of schools. I do not think it will solve everything though.

126. My question to Christine is, your school is not part of the collegiate?

(Mrs Owen) No.

127. So you have decided positively not to become part of it?

(Mrs Owen) Positively decided not to because we are in the SWAN network, this EIC. My school is still a challenging school and for me I felt that it would distract me from having such a major focus in school. I have to be there basically a lot and it is hands on. I felt that what we were doing within the SWAN network—and there are great similarities: we are having joint teacher days, joint professional development. We have even employed a co-ordinator, so I suppose in some ways what has happened is that the partnership has gone into two although there are still links between us. It is early days really. I positively decided for those reasons that I would not enter in.

(Mrs Harker) SWAN is seen as a very effective EIC network going well beyond what some of the other networks have gone into. It is quite innovative in

some of the things that we have done. It was because of that, working closely with other schools, that we were in a position to say, "Yes, we will go a stage further and go for the collegiate", but the network is still the umbrella organisation.

**Chairman**

128. SWAN is South West Area Network, is it?  
(Mrs Harker) Yes. Think of Longbridge.

**Valerie Davey**

129. We are beginning to see some of the diversity within Birmingham and our conclusion, those of us who have come back from the group I was in today, recognise that the key feature in all of this is superb headship and we have met some superb people, and three more obviously here today. Has Birmingham deliberately provided support, given you that confidence to do what you are doing? Secondly, the Government has set up the new college, the School Management College. Is there any influence yet from that? How have you got this confidence? I know one answer but how has Birmingham arrived at this position?

(Mrs Owen) The Chief Education Officer has altered the whole tenor of the LEA. We have all been here a long time. I remember when I was going for headship before Tim came and the councillors turned up late, nobody knew where you were, you felt nobody cared what you were saying anyway, and the schools were a tip. We have had more resources and we have had somebody who has talked up education, who has challenged, who has supported us. We cannot tell you the number of times he has been into our schools. He was there on my first day in this tough school, at my first OFSTED when we might have failed. He personally has re-focused the LEA and so I suppose that has enabled people like us to work in a different atmosphere with resources, support and access. Tim is always there. If you have a bee in your bonnet you go and talk to him about it and you feel that you can influence change and be taken account of.

130. Do you feel as well now that you are supporting each other?

(Mrs Harker) Yes.

131. You are obviously talking in networks of schools. Is this in effect a network of headship? I cannot get the feel yet as to whether you have got support from Tim and the LEA and therefore headship has got a new feel about it or whether it is something which is broader than that within which headship is crucial and therefore you are perhaps helping each other.

(Mr Arnott) I think there is a sense of community. It is interesting that Ruth and Chris both teach on the south side of the city and I work on the north side of the city in Stockland Green. As we were saying informally earlier on, the city does tend to divide organisationally into north and south a little bit and there is a bit of a sense that you work on the south side or the north side. I do not think that is competitive. I agree with what Chris has said. I think the single biggest factor in Birmingham's progress is

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down to one man and that is Tim Brighouse. At a time when education was under pressure and being criticised publicly and morale nationally was going down, he was coming round and doing the things that he does so well. Like Chris, he was in my school on my first day drinking coffee in the waiting room waiting for me to finish an assembly. He does that and that is great, but he has also contributed in a major way to the building of a community of heads in Birmingham. We have heads conferences annually when all the heads get together and we have a theme and we work hard but we get together and we know one another. That has been of tremendous value because it would be easy to get lost in a city the size of Birmingham as heads. I think there are a lot of people in Birmingham coming up to headship, in senior posts in schools, who have spent a long time working in the city and a lot of us are developing our own leaders. There is a sense of community. There is certainly a sense of improving on previous best and the heads that I work with and that I know are all wedded to that. Some years it does not happen. We dipped this year on our A-C figure but you look for reasons and we analyse it and we share that. Basically the aim is to keep improving all the time within this supportive community. You mentioned the National College of School Leadership. Because I am a fairly recent appointment as a head, I did the new national professional qualification for headship as one of the first cohorts and I have therefore had a fair bit to do with the National College of School Leadership. I think it has the potential to be a tremendous lever to improve qualities of leadership. Certainly at headteacher conferences we are now looking at how to improve leadership and learning lessons from the world of commerce, the world of industry. For example, Daniel Goleman's book on emotional leadership is one that I am reading at present which is very good and which was on the reading list at the last heads' conference, that sort of thing.<sup>1</sup> There are also opportunities. In the Midlands we have a headteachers' and industry organisation based at Warwick University which is the management arm of the national professional qualification for headship. They have organised, for example, a study visit to Oslo in the half term break. I am going on that so I shall be spending a week in Norway, three days shadowing a head in a Norwegian secondary school and the rest of the time looking at leadership and looking at bringing something back to Birmingham from another city in Europe. Leadership in education is very exciting at present and that is a sense that I think is shared amongst this community of heads.

(Mrs Harker) Can I just add one point because I am a member of the Secondary Heads Association and do a little bit of work with headteachers as a result. I go round the country and people are very envious of me being a headteacher in Birmingham. The atmosphere, the ethos, are very different in most other LEAs. All of us came into teaching because we wanted to be educators, we wanted to work with youngsters. It is very easy these days to get pulled away from that—the bureaucracy, the paperwork, the legislation (dare I say it?). There are very strong

pulls away from that. Every time I meet Tim he pulls me back in the direction of children and learning and that is very inspiring. He keeps us at the leading edge through video links up with some of the leading educators in the world. He is making us think, he is challenging us all the time and that is very unusual and it is very special. We are all wondering what we are going to do now.

(Mrs Owen) I would like to make one point about the national professional qualification for deputies. One of the big areas that it omits is to do with behaviour and in terms of urban education and challenging schools I cannot understand how any head these days can gain a qualification that does not talk about the management of behaviour positively. I think that is an important thing to address.

Ms Munn

132. Which is an excellent point with which to lead into what I was going to ask about because I very much echo what Val said in the schools I have been to. I have been to some of the same ones and some different ones. We have seen dedicated, inspiring, committed headteachers but all with their own particular style and way of dealing with things in their own schools. Obviously pupil behaviour has been a key issue within all of those schools. I have seen a number of strategies already. I wonder if you could share with the Committee strategies that you use in your schools to try and deal with some of the difficult issues of behaviour that are around.

(Mrs Owen) I do not know if you know, but recently the headteachers, we ourselves, commissioned our own research amongst all the secondary heads in Birmingham. I was one of the people who collated the results because of the raising of issues of behaviour. Perhaps if I were to tell you some of the findings from that it would be helpful.

133. Yes, and it would be nice if we could have a copy of the research.

(Mrs Owen) We actually only did it orally because we felt that if it did get into certain newspapers, for instance,—we were not scandalmongering. We wanted a degree of honesty and in fact it was anonymous research and people wished it to be. What we found in Birmingham was that the vast majority of Birmingham heads said that behaviour for the majority in their schools was improving due to the huge investment made possible by *Excellence in Cities*, the standards fund to appoint dedicated behaviour mentors, attendance workers, etc. But they also were under more pressure than ever because the extremes of behaviour were worse. It is these children that fall outside the boundaries of what you call normal naughty behaviour. There are serious concerns about these. We feel that there is not enough support, getting access to child mental health psychiatry, for instance. I read today somewhere suggesting that schools appoint a senior teacher for child mental health. What will that do? We are not experts. We cannot deal with children who are severely troubled or troubling in their schools. There was very much a feeling that the problems were coming up from Key Stage 2 and were increasing, and that in many ways primary schools were able to accommodate behaviour because of their small,

<sup>1</sup> Goleman D (2002), *The New Leaders. Transforming the Art of Leadership into the Science of Results*. Little, Brown, London.

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single teacher all the time set-up, but when you amplify the numbers and the opportunities in a secondary school these were then rising. They were not being addressed through the code of practice like most of us do so that we have a staged plan for pupils presenting difficulties with targets, meetings with parents, on report, support here, external courses there. The impact of unsupportive and hostile parents is a big issue in schools like ours. I could give you a quote from this morning but I do not know if you are allowed to swear in a Select Committee.

#### Chairman

134. You are allowed within reason.

(Mrs Owen) A parent phoned me this morning at eight o'clock to say her child would not be in today again. I said, "Why?", and she said, "Well, she has started her shit again". I said, "Tell me about it." "She has run away again. She did it at Woodgate." I said, "What are you going to do then?", and she said, "I've got a 14-month old baby. What do you think I'm going to do about?" I said, "An 11-year old girl on the street is a bit worrying. Have you been involved with Social Services before?" "Yes." "Well, do you not think you should phone Social Services now?" Phone banged down. That is quite minor, as opposed to parents who come storming up over trivial issues like trainers.

(Mrs Harker) Jewellery yesterday.

(Mrs Owen) Then we get litigation on top of that. All of that is a big drain on resources, particularly in challenging schools, but not only there. Therefore staff recruitment in schools where more challenging behaviour is the norm is more difficult, so you get into that cycle.

135. The trade unions told us yesterday how pleased they were with the way in which the more difficult pupils were dealt with and that the framework was good.

(Mrs Owen) The framework for intervention?

136. Yes.

(Mrs Owen) I think some people have found that very helpful, particularly primary schools. We have found very helpful the Behaviour Support Service. In fact, in our EIC network we negotiated buying more places and having more provision. We put in extra money to share provision for children who were troubled and who needed time off site in a different environment. That is what we feel we are lacking for those extremes, the more specialised support systems. I have been asked to take a child whose statement is a nightmare. He has been through schools, he has been through a learning support unit which cost a quarter of a million pounds. He did not succeed there, he has not succeeded anywhere. He is violent, aggressive, unpredictable. "Here, you have him." Come on. It is not just the impact on my children and my school. What about that child? Who is helping that child to adjust his behaviour so that he is going to be able to be included when he is older? The other issue is about exclusions. The fixed term exclusion figures really under-report the extent of the problem. Schools in more advantageous areas do not have to exclude. They can suggest to parents that their children find another school instead of being

formally excluded. There is great resentment about the £6,000 penalty for exclusion. If you have a really serious incident, a thug attacks another pupil, it could be racial, it could be with a knife, you exclude them and you lose £6,000. There are issues about that and about the appeals committees where heads who have been through some of these really feel they have been through the mangle and are well traumatised by this inquisitorial, adversarial manner in which the appeals committees are seen to be operating.

(Mrs Harker) And more parents are bringing solicitors along. We are not legal professionals. It is very difficult to get advice although Legal Services are very good but they are hard pressed. We are all of us facing several cases where we have got litigation going on and that is very time-consuming and it is draining and it gets people nowhere.

(Mrs Owen) The only other thing I would say is that in the vast majority of schools that is where children behave their best. We see the best of children. We mould them. We expect that; we enable it to happen. Some of the children we teach, out in the community are very difficult. All of us over the last five or six years in particular, the range of strategies we have put into place (and I have put it in the report) I felt was awe-inspiring when you see what individual schools are doing to support children in good behaviour.

(Mr Arnott) Also you see what individual teachers are doing with individual pupils within the school. I support everything that Chris is saying. There are continuous relationships that are built up by individual members of staff with individual children which beggar belief. I have got several children in my school who, if it were not for a key member of staff in one place or another, that child would be out on the street, taking drugs, all those sorts of things. I would just like to add one thing to what Chris said which is about the appeals panels. They are amazing things. I went through one just at the end of summer. Normally they take about half a day but the final judgement from the appeal panel, which dismissed the appeal and supported the school, began with the sentence, "At the hearing conducted on 1 March, 24 March, 15 May, 16 June, 17 July and 22 July"—because I know that it actually went to six days of evidence because of the evidence that was produced by this parent with an army of solicitors, and I had to take an assistant head and we came through that and we did manage. I have referred to it in my evidence, that this was a woman that we had to take to court twice because she had made death threats against members of my staff. Schools are not protected from society. We are a public service. We are open to society. We take every child and every child's parents and the full range of social problems come into school. I think that for far too long schools have been blamed for what happens and not enough attention has been given to the super job that schools do. Thankfully now I think the trend in appeal panels is beginning to move back a little bit. The pendulum is beginning to swing back. I was grateful that in the appeal that was referred to a moment ago the panel did clearly understand what the situation in the school had been like in this particular case. Behaviour is the big issue. For far too long it has been an uncomfortable issue that politicians and the DfES have not really wanted to face up to because it is not

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**[Chairman Cont]**

very palatable when it is behaviour that is in newspapers. It is that which is holding back other children, thousands of children across the country, from achieving their potential in my view.

*(Mrs Harker)* We are not in such challenging circumstances and yet these issues are still a daily occurrence. In my school just this morning the ESW (education social worker) was in school, and in court this afternoon. The parent had forced the child to take the stand to say that it was the child's decision not to attend school, not hers, and it has just gone completely out of control. Having said that, you asked about positive things. In EIC I think most schools would say that the learning mentors have been very successful. We have topped up the EIC money in my own school with standards funds and we have appointed two. In fact, it is such an important issue that we have appointed an assistant head to head up what you might call "social inclusion" to try and get a whole school community approach. We have developed a pupil support base. We used the first year of EIC funding for that. It is not an in-school exclusion unit. It is a base from which a wide range of support can take place. We were lucky that we have got staff who are qualified in anger management, personal development workshops, conflict resolution, bullying, self-esteem. We involve the police with offenders and there are regular sessions which are proving very successful with young offenders. There is individual counselling and very carefully structured group work because a lot of these youngsters have very poor social skills. Working in a group and helping them to relate to other people is very important. Things can be done. However, I agree with my colleagues. There are some students for whom, however hard we try,—and we have tried very hard—in terms of inclusion in my own school it is just not appropriate for them to be in school because the cost to the school and often to the individual is too great.

*(Mrs Owen)* It would be fair to say that that range of strategies Ruth has used there is pretty common throughout secondary schools in Birmingham.

*(Mrs Harker)* EIC has done a great deal.

**Mr Pollard**

137. You said there comes a time when you cannot do any more for a student. What happens then? What do you suggest is done?

*(Mrs Harker)* The experiment that we undertook with the Behaviour Support Service was very effective. For two terms permanent exclusions in south west schools disappeared. That stopped because the rate of exclusions in other areas in the city put such great pressure on the PRU that they could not do it. That was very successful because all of us as schools were also willing to take excluded pupils because they came with support and a sort of guarantee that if, with support, it did not work out then the youngster would be taken away. That gives those children who are excluded from schools a place to go and the support that many of them do not get. That was very successful.

*(Mrs Owen)* It took them out for a period of time so that people could intervene, people who have more experience with behaviour modification

techniques in a small group situation, and they gradually support them back into school. That was what was so excellent about it. We directed it; we agreed between us, and we actually put in a sum of money without worrying whether we actually got our own individual number of pupils, if you see what I mean, so we really did share this provision for the common good of the group of schools and it was excellent.

*(Mr Arnott)* The South West Initiative was taken up by us in north Birmingham last year. We are now running a similar programme with equally promising results. Can I add in to what has been said something I do feel strongly about and that is the tremendous improvement that is made to schools by what you might call para-professionals or mentors. I do not want that to be a negative term because I do not mean that at all. I could not run my school now without my learning support assistants, my mentors and various other people who work in the school and work with children but not in a teaching capacity. The traditional one teacher in a class of 30 is increasingly seen less often. We have a large number of learning support assistants who we target traditionally towards special needs children but we also now employ them through a different budget. It starts with the core departments and now all my departments have their own learning support assistant led and managed by the head of department, supported through our learning support line. We have a senior manager who looks after them and works with them on their professional development. They are there to be deployed by the head of department to assist in learning in the subjects, so the English department has a learning support assistant, etc, and it is making a huge difference. What we are finding is that children are more confident learners and it is also having an impact on behaviour. Ruth has got a bigger school than mine with two mentors. I have got 600 children in my school which is smallish. It is a reflection of the sorts of issues that we face in Stockland Green that I have a team of four mentors, all of whom are working full time and are absolutely fantastic.

*(Mrs Owen)* We also need more help with the child psychiatric bit for children who are acting out, who are bereaved and who need expert counselling support. We do not find that we get any of that.

*(Mrs Harker)* The only way we can get that is to put it on paper that they are a suicide risk. We do it because that will actually mobilise them. It is the only way we can get immediate psychological help for students.

*(Mr Arnott)* I do not think that psychological problems for children are in any related to their levels of deprivation. One of the things that I find in schools is that the pressures on children, particularly from the media and particularly from the industries that target children to sell products and offer children stereotypes which become so strong that children who do not comply with those stereotypes often feel forced out or find it difficult to cope, result in huge pressures, particularly on young teenagers, which makes it particularly difficult for many children. Again, mentoring and learning support professions in schools are often a super source of support for both the school and the child.

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138. This is where early intervention helps. The quicker you are into it the quicker you can do something about it.

*(Mrs Harker)* Absolutely.

**Paul Holmes**

139. The OECD PISA Study, the international comparison, put Finland at the top of the list. When they were asked how, Finland said, "We have created a system of proper comprehensive schools and we do not allow any school to dump their problems onto another school." Christine in her written evidence talked about struggling schools that, because they have got spare capacity, therefore get the problems, the excluded kids dumped on them. Is there any way in our system we can stop the problems being dumped?

*(Mrs Owen)* I think there is. I think that the BSS model was an extremely good one. If a youngster has not been to school for a year in Andy's school, and the ESW says to me, "Oh, the parents have chosen you and you have got a space", what are the chances of that child succeeding? Zilch. But if, like with the BSS, you could take them away and start to gradually re-introduce them, maybe support them by coming in once a week, that sort of support I think would build up. But I think that schools like Andy's and like mine was eight years ago should have a moratorium. We should not be asked to take the most difficult children in the city; other more advantaged schools should be asked. If we are networked, as we are, we have shown that although we could be seen as competitors in some ways we are prepared to share, so who knows whether Ruth's school or my school paid more money for BSS and got the best value, but in terms of the community in our area, we know that we are doing the right thing. I think there are things that can be done. One of the things is that the ESW service or the LEA does not know how many times Andy has been asked to take children from different bits of the city and they do tend to work again in their patches. They are getting better too, the ESW service is improving.

140. Is there any way that under the system as it exists you could, say, force the grammar schools to take problem children?

*(Mrs Owen)* I would like to see that happen. Certainly some of those more advantageous schools suggest heavily to young people that the school down the road, which might be me because I have got a grammar school in my area, has spaces and if they do not want to go to permanent exclusion it might be in their interest to go there. Again I do feel that there is a willingness, certainly in Birmingham because we have had so much experience now of networking and sharing, that this is not beyond question. I think there are many heads of governing bodies who would be willing (there are a few that would not) to work it out if we had this proviso, as we did with BSS, that if it does not work out, no form filling, no inquiries, no panels, "We will take the child away, we will take them back, we will do some more work with them and either we will come back to you or we will go to one of your colleagues and ask for another start in a school."

**Mr Turner**

141. You were quite complimentary about the local education authority and about the Chief Education officer. Could I just quote something which was given in evidence yesterday: "All too frequently, the LEA appears to feel the need to bid for involvement in every new initiative and pilot project. There appears to be little evaluation or prioritisation of what is on offer. This results in added pressure on Birmingham teachers." Is that unfair?

*(Mrs Harker)* There is a bidding culture. It does worry me. I do not think it is just the LEA. Individual schools these days have to spend a great deal of time bidding in order to try and get something and when you bid you are never quite sure so I can understand the LEA taking that approach because I think it is one that many of us are pushed into taking in schools. I think it is a little bit unfair, although I know where the person who said that is coming from because there is a lot going on. The fact is we do not all have to get involved in it. The collegiate is a good example. It is an opt-in thing in most cases. My view is that that does keep us at the leading edge of developments. Perhaps it could be better planned; I do not know, but it certainly keeps us at the leading edge.

*(Mrs Owen)* I think there could be lots of initiatives where we could say this could have been better or that could have been better, but when we look at the totality of it we are all pretty practised at saying no. Even if it is Tim's baby we do not just go along with it.

*(Mrs Harker)* We say, "How much is there in it for us?"

*(Mrs Owen)* I said, "No, because that is going to distract me from my major task", so there is some truth in it.

*(Mr Arnott)* I am in the early days of running a school that needs to be brought forward. I have a very clear set of priorities and I only bid for anything that is very focused on our improvement plan because I do not want to distract teachers from the main job which is to hit the half dozen main targets that we are working towards. We have a strict approach to bidding, that we do not distract ourselves from the main theme. If we think it is going to be of benefit then we will look at it, but in practice we have restricted our bids in the last 18 months to the specialist school bid for the reasons that I have given. I think we might have bid for one or two things but we certainly have not allowed it to distract us. The collegiate idea is a good one and I think that as the school grows and becomes more confident then we will be able to look at these things. Schools are individual. They are little communities and they are all different is what I am saying, and we have to work to the strengths of our schools. It is our job as heads to nurture that community and to make it the best place because that is where the children are.

*(Mrs Harker)* I think that one of the differences about the LEA under Tim is that the balance of pressure and support has always been there. Whilst there has been pressure, and sometimes he comes at you with your targets, "What are you going to do about this?", there is always that support. Whilst there might be pressure on occasions to get involved

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in perhaps too many initiatives, at the same time it is within a supportive context. That is one of the things that some people from other LEAs tell me is lacking. There is pressure but there is not the support as well.

142. Somebody said in the 1980s said, "The next best thing to a magic wand is a good head". When the good head leaves, or the good Chief Education Officer for that matter, what is it systematically that should be put in place in case the next one is not quite such a bright spark?

(Mrs Harker) Systems can and will change with time. It is more to do with the culture. Tim has left such a strong culture in Birmingham so that, although he might not be the strongest person systems wise, and he would be the first to admit that, he has changed the culture and I think that that is such a powerful force that without systems here there and everywhere it will remain.

(Mrs Owen) It is growing people, is it not?

(Mrs Harker) Yes.

(Mr Arnott) Yes,.

(Mrs Owen) We have said that. Tim and I had this discussion, that a good school can survive a poor head for a reasonable length of time, but a school in challenging circumstances cannot survive without really good leadership for any length of time at all. You always need that head, I think. They have always got to be of a certain standard, but then it is the people you have grown alongside that, the middle managers, the assistant heads. If you set enough high standards within your own institution then they will not all fall apart when people move on. That is the history of troubled schools. They do tend to go up and down very much when people move on. I think that is partly because people underestimate how long it takes to change the culture. I have been there eight years now and I am really seeing it, but after three years, four years, five years?

(Mr Arnott) In the details that I sent out, the first thing on my list in the change process at Stockland Green process is the culture. That is what you have to target first.

#### Chairman

143. We are coming to the end of our time. One is always conscious that when witnesses come before the Committee they will get on the bus or in their car and suddenly think, "Why the hell did I not say such-and-such?" You have a quick chance to say before we finish this session anything you would like to leave with us that you do not think has been said in this short session.

(Mr Arnott) Support, if nationally we could have the same amount of support that we have had in Birmingham from our Chief Education Officer. We talked about the balance of support and pressure. In order to get the culture that we have got in Birmingham we had to have our champion and that was Tim. There is no question of that. I would ask you to take back to central Government the thought that the education service needs support. We went

through the eighties and the early nineties and I have to say that those of us who were working in the education service felt beleaguered, criticised, second-rate. What has happened in Birmingham in the last ten years has done wonders. We are now seeing it coming through in a large urban area. The education service does not just need pressure. It also needs lots of support. I am glad to see the green shoots coming through.

144. So that is all down to Tim, not to Government policies?

(Mr Arnott) Oh, no. I use Tim as an example. As I say, there are green shoots coming through. *Excellence in Cities* is doing fantastic things for children in urban deprived environments. That is wonderful. I am not saying blind support. There are schools that are not doing well and can improve and have to improve. There is accountability here, but we do need support.

(Mrs Harker) It is along the same lines really. The profession is beleaguered at the moment. We are seeing increasing difficulties in getting good staff. I appointed one today because two people failed to turn up on the first day of term. It has never happened to me before. Having said that, we are still attracting more people into Birmingham than possibly into some of the other big cities. It is to do with morale and self-esteem and allowing people to do the job that they came into the profession to do—teach. Sometimes the agenda and the pressure from outside does not allow that to happen. It is really getting back to—I hate to use the word—basics, but that is what it is about.

(Mrs Owen) I am going to follow the theme, I suppose. In terms of administration, bureaucracy and workload, I do feel that we need a degree of common sense and trust about monitoring and evaluating. I quote a form there that we had from the LEA because the LEA has been asked by the Government to account for this money. The form is ten pages long, requiring enormous detail. There is no way we are going to fill that in. If we want that then we have to have somebody full time monitoring and evaluating. To me that is crazy. We need people, as I have put there, helping to dig the road, not watching and saying how to do it. The EIC and the pupil learning credits have been wonderful models in that we have been given the money, we have been told what the objectives are, we have had some checking through NFER and evaluation of all that, but it has been light touch evaluation. We have been accountable for those outputs and to me that is the model of evaluation that we should pursue.

Chairman: It has been a pure gem, this hour, so thank you very much. We have enjoyed it so much. If you have further thoughts we are very open to you dropping us a line or picking up the phone to tell us whatever you want. We will be going to Auckland to look at one city in October and we will compare the two cities and publish a report. Thank you very much.

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### Examination of Witnesses

MRS MONICA COKE, Co-opted governor at Harborne Hill Secondary School, MR ROY GILLARD, Co-opted governor at Swanshurst Girls' School, and MRS FRAN STEVENS, Chair, Birmingham Governors' Network Executive Committee, were examined.

#### Chairman

145. Can I say what a pleasure it is to have representatives of the governors of Birmingham schools with us this evening and I welcome Monica, Roy and Fran. We hold these meetings in relative informality but they are very formal in the sense that we are pleased to have our shorthand writer with us. She will be transcribing all these evidence sessions and every comment you make will be published. Normally I would say you are on television but when we take evidence outside Parliament we do not have the opportunity of having it on television. It is very rare that we do this on the road, if you like, and we are so delighted to be here in Birmingham for a full week to try to understand what, for this largest local education authority in the land (but one that is much improved), are the tasks, the challenges, the achievements. We really want you to be frank about the education service. We do not want to hear a rosy story. We do not want to hear all complaint. We want you to tell us how it is in Birmingham here you stand as governors. Can I ask you if you want to make a brief introduction? Who wants to lead?

(Mrs Coke) I will start by saying who I am and the school that I represent at the moment. As the nameplate says, I am Monica Coke and I am a governor at Harborne Hill School. I have been a governor there for about 18 months now. I started about the same time as the new headteacher. I am also the Vice Chair of Birmingham Governors' Forum. I am one of the founding members of setting up a Birmingham Governors' Forum and that came about because my colleague on my right, Fran, and I were a little bit dissatisfied that governors were being done to as opposed to being part of the process that works together with Government or with the local authority in looking at what the needs are, at our young people in schools and about raising the achievement targets and attainment of our young people in schools. We felt that if governors were being given a lot of power but were not actually being part of the process to agree those powers then we wanted to have a forum where we could debate those issues and get the views of our other colleagues on the ground. We are not paid to do the job and it just seemed as though we were being put upon even more and more in what we had to do and the power was very onerous but we were not actually being part of that decision-making, that is to say, we feel that that is something we feel ought to be part of our remit. I have been a school governor for 14 or 15 years now. I have been a governor at primary school and now at Harborne Hill. I was asked to join the governing body there because they were under special measures and they needed some experienced governors to help them move the school forward. The school is just outside the city centre. It has a high population of students from Asian, African-Caribbean, Russian and other minority ethnic groupings. It has a high mobility rate. It was troubled with under-achievement and also not enough students in the

school. Thankfully, the closing of Cardinal Newman School has helped raise the roll. At the moment we are at 521 which is helping the school somewhat. There is a deficit budget there still but all of the governors are working hard with the headteacher and the rest of the staff to turn round the school. The last OFSTED report, which was done in October 2001, has given us a marked improvement on where it started from when we got there. The school is improving but there are lots of issues there which I am sure we will come to.

146. Thank you very much for that introduction.

(Mrs Stevens) I am a governor at two schools in the city. I was a governor at Washwood Heath School but things have recently changed there, so that is no longer so. I am Chair of Birmingham Governors' Forum. As governors sitting on the Executive we are very proud of a number of achievements within our schools in Birmingham and we can see that there has been a raising of standards. However, we are very aware that there is still a number of challenges that we have to deal with, transition being one of those challenges for us.

147. Transition at 11?

(Mrs Stevens) Transition from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 where the schools have not merged, but on the whole I think the main issues now are probably from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. Governors are asking questions as to, does the curriculum that we have suit our youngsters, or are we giving a curriculum that ensures that all our children can reach their full potential? We worry that there is too much emphasis on just raising of standards and academic achievement and not looking at the skills that youngsters need to equip them for lifelong learning and going into the world of education. Those are some of the things that concern us. We are also concerned about recognising the need to do further work with parents and the community. It is essential that we start to listen to community, that if we are going to have sustainable communities schools should be at the heart of those. In order to make them sustainable governors feel that the voices of the parents and the people in those communities should be listened to. We think we have some challenges there and some way to go if we want to have a city that we are all working and living in and doing things together in. Those are the biggest challenges as I see them that we need to work on.

(Mr Gillard) I am a governor of Birmingham's largest all-girls' secondary school, Swanshurst, which is less than four miles from the city centre and, with around 60 per cent ethnic students, it is also the largest girls' school in Europe. I am delighted to say that it is a beacon school with a first class record and reputation. Currently we are seeking specialist status as a science college and are optimistic that we will succeed. At this point I would like to take us down a single issue route, and all single issues are inclined to be neglected. This affects secondary schools throughout Birmingham and throughout the land in

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terms of seeking specialist status. At Swanshurst it has given the governors and headteachers some concern about the enormous amount of time that has had to be put in to raise the £50,000 sponsorship necessary to make the bid. As far as the bid itself is concerned we have not got the status yet but there does not appear to be a real problem. We are optimistic, as I said. But despite having excellent relations with business and industry in our local community and knowing that the purpose of the £50,000 sponsorship is to improve that, we have found it very difficult within the economic situation for business and industry as it is now, and raising the money is proving a mammoth task, although it does look as if we will succeed. It is particularly difficult when the sponsorship rules eliminate any contribution from companies which have any existing commercial links with the school. It seems rather ridiculous. The bottom line is that a huge number of teaching hours have had to be put in by senior staff to raise the money. In fact, it was virtually a full time job for one of our deputy heads for about two months, amounting to something like 200 teaching hours. We have staff that are very good at teaching and running a huge school. That is for what they have been trained. They have not been trained in fund raising, nor should they need to be.

148. We have heard that from many quarters since we have been in Birmingham and before we came to Birmingham we were aware of that problem, and I can assure you that the Committee takes that very seriously indeed.

(*Mr Gillard*) One would hope that action would be taken.

Mr Pollard: We will pass it on to the Secretary of State.

Chairman: Let us get on with the questioning because we want to get as much impact into this short meeting as we can.

**Jeff Ennis**

149. We read a lot in the press about the onerous workload of teachers in schools but I think, speaking as an LEA governor at a comprehensive school in Barnsley, that that analogy can be extended to governors, so much so that I know in Barnsley and Doncaster we are having increasing difficulty in particular in recruiting parent governors to school governing bodies. Is that the experience of governors in Birmingham? I am not just making the comment with regard to parent governors, but obviously also co-opted or other types of governors. If it is the same experience, what does the Government have to do to try and make sure it is easier for people to become governing body members?

(*Mrs Stevens*) The Executive Group has looked at this issue a lot. It clearly is a problem. It is also a problem that it can sometimes take as long as three years to really get a feel for what the role of governance is about. Then you find you have got another year and then you can be off. However, we can quickly resolve that by getting people back on again because we do have a shortage of governors. We have felt for a long time that there needs to be work done with people before they become a governor so that you begin to talk to them about the

role rather than inviting somebody along to the first meeting, sitting down and trying to get on with the business. We ought to be tapping into the other good work that is going on in cities like in housing and lots of community projects and trying to recruit people from those to become school governors, people who know about those communities and are working with them.

150. Like housing action trusts and things like that?

(*Mrs Stevens*) Yes. There needs to be a sort of pre-training. What happens often is that governors get on to a governing body and they are overwhelmed. They really do not know where to begin. Just beginning to understand the jargon that we so often use and which becomes the norm after a while is very off-putting. There needs to be time to explain to governors what governance is about and that might also begin to help some of the problems we see in schools where there are difficulties between governors and the school management. We need to get governors to understand roles and responsibilities.

(*Mrs Coke*) I feel that if there were some form of honorarium more people might take it up. I also feel that it is not compulsory for your workplace to give you time off to become a governor because a lot of the work that you have to do does not only take place in the evening. It is about having time to visit the school; it is about having time to be part of committees during the daytime because of the time when the school opens and the business takes place. To visit the school you need to be at school when there are people in the school, when the children are there. It is about looking at how they are learning, looking at the curriculum and so on. I think a lot of people who are in work find it difficult to have the time out from work to do those chores. Also, I think if there was an honorarium it might be a carrot. A lot of inner city schools in Birmingham have people from the Indian sub-continent. The husbands are at work and the wives are not allowed to be out by themselves, so that creates a problem in itself, to get people from those communities to become school governors. There is also the language issue. A lot of them feel that they do not speak English well enough to be able to contribute because of the flow of things and the amount of reading there is and the amount of issues and the in-depth study that is required. It has taken me about four years to understand some of the things that I needed to fathom out. It is the whole process of the abundance of paperwork because you do not have somebody who is summarising and coming out with the implications and what you really need to do in some of the documents you get. There is also the other issue around the short timescale for consultation and all that sort of thing. It is an abundance of things. The ones who are committed to give time to the process are already overstretched and going to another committee meeting is an issue. I have also heard of people who have been governors and have decided that they do not want to do it any more because they felt that there was too much clique-ism within the governing body, that the chair and the headteacher sew things up and they do not take any notice of the minions if you do not quite fit the complexion of who is already there. There are a lot of issues like those and people just do not want to

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**[Jeff Ennis Cont]**

do it. They just see it as an other task that is cheap labour, to do a lot of work to get the Government out of paying for and getting real people to do the job.

151. Do you think the LEA are offering enough support to governing bodies given the scenario we have just elaborated on, or could they do more?

(Mrs Coke) I know that the LEA have done a lot of work around recruiting governors because I know that the Governors' Support Unit and the equalities division works. We need community organisations to organise awareness events whereby they do presentations to try and attract particular governors, either from the African-Caribbean or Indian sub-continent, so all that sort of stuff is going on but it is all still a hard task.

(Mr Gillard) On the point of getting ethnic governors at schools where there is well over 50 per cent of ethnic pupils, it is proving particularly difficult. If I take you through the situation at my school, Swanshurst, when I joined the governors four years ago there was just a single ethnic governor. He left after a few months although he had done a reasonable length of service. It took us ages to even get a single ethnic governor to replace him, a serious effort of trying to find people who are interested and prepared to get involved. In fact, we have got one each year over the last two years, so that there are now three ethnic governors. We would very much welcome having 50 per cent ethnic governors, more if you wish, and we think that would only be fair. That is also reflected in a way through the interest of parents, or to a degree the lack of interest of parents. At the annual meeting for parents, despite all our efforts at our school and speaking with colleagues at other schools, it is almost impossible to get more than a handful of parents at these meetings. We have 1,750 schoolchildren belonging to the school and there are about nine parents at the actual meeting if you are lucky. It is quite extraordinary really why parents are not much more interested.

#### Chairman

152. They are coming in good numbers to parents' evenings?

(Mr Gillard) Yes, much better in that respect, but not the annual meeting.

(Mrs Stevens) I think we need to begin to value governors. Many of our governors are parents and parents of kids in our schools. We talk about wanting parental involvement. Often we are a little bit nervous of when parental involvement turns into a strategic way of thinking. It is okay to be involved in whatever is going on in the school, but sometimes it is a fear when governors want to think more strategically about what is needed for the school. We must listen to those parents because although they might not be seen to know much about education, there is still an important role for them to play in what is right for the school. I believe through governance we can begin to give control back to local people. We need to enable people to control their own lives and then we might begin not to have the behaviour issues in our schools or the truancy or the exclusion. I think if governors can really begin to believe in what we are doing we might see an improvement.

#### Mr Turner

153. Fran started to answer my question. There are really two extremes in this governing role, are there not? One is that you turn up once a term and have a cup of tea and approve everything the head has said, and the other is that you get involved in the appointment of the tea lady. Neither of those is very strategic. How would you define your ideal governor's job?

(Mrs Stevens) First of all, to understand what it is that the school is trying to do, that we have got X amount of money. I think it can be simplified. We have got this pot of money. A lot of it is going to go on teaching; how then do we best want to do it to benefit our kids in the school; what do we want for our children, and then to draw up a plan. Often governors are presented with a school development plan. You can start simple—X amount of money, limited resources. What are we going to do with these resources to ensure that our kids get the best from them? Is it going to be spent on teachers so we can start to get people to think, "Is that a key resource?", or do we think books are better? It does not take long, I do not believe, to get people thinking, "Yes, we can give more to that", but if you present things to so-called ordinary people in a certain way it disempowers them; it does not empower them.

(Mrs Coke) Because of the amount of work that needs to be done I think sometimes teachers see governors as interfering busybodies and they do not have anything to bring to the table because they are not educators. But what I think sometimes teachers do not see is that governors are people outside of that establishment and they will be able to see what is going on in there with a different perspective. They come from businesses and you run a business on certain systems and procedures, and it is about having those systems and procedures and ensuring that you are monitoring and evaluating and providing targets and supporting and there is the pastoral care and all those sorts of things. If you are not involved in the situation you can sometimes bring a different perspective to bear. Also, in a school like, for instance, where you have African Caribbean students, we know that African Caribbean young men are under achieving. The school is a community and it takes a whole village to raise your child. It is not just the teachers in the school. It is about the businesses in the area because at the end of the day they are going to be wanting people coming out of those schools with certain skills to do the job. They are also going to be wanting this citizenship and governance around behaviour and you might not be academically qualified but you will be able to do a job and it is about the best job for that person so that they can get on the ladder of managing their own lives. You probably do need governors to be full time people to do that because they can then pick up the roles of bringing on the rest of the community. A governor's role is not a full time job and there is a lot to do. I think it needs to be more of a full time job in order to deliver what needs to be delivered. A governor will be somebody who provides support and assistance to the school and be able to bring on the wider community so that everybody is working together to achieve what needs to be achieved, somebody who can go and talk the same language as

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the children in the school or the same language as the community that the school serves, somebody who understands both sides of the argument from the school's perspective and from the wider community perspective. I think we can build on that.

**Mr Turner**

154. In a sense we have got one model which is very much an intermediary, an ambassador role?

(Mrs Coke) Yes.

155. And one which is much more of assistance to the management, in fact, in a way the management itself.

(Mrs Coke) Yes.

156. Does the LEA seek to recruit governors by reference to either of these models or is it left very much to the individual school to say, "This is the kind of governor we want. Now let us go out and find one"?

(Mrs Stevens) Where there are schools in challenging circumstances the LEA will be very proactive in trying to put on governors who may have the skills needed to support those schools, which is good. I think on the whole you get governing bodies doing their own audit and saying, "These are the skills that we have got and these are the skills that we need, so our strengths are this and our limitations are that", and then recruit co-opt people with the competences that they need. Where I sometimes have a problem is that there is an inequality in as much as almost by definition in certain areas you will get governors with some more of the skills that you might be looking for than in other areas and that becomes an inequality issue. We need to address that by saying, "Can we put some governor in from another area into there?", and gradually wean them out, leaving the community then to do it, but to start them off so to speak. Would that make sense? I think there needs to be a bit more of sharing skills across the city so that it is not just in the leafy suburbs where you have already got your accountant, your solicitor and your GP sitting on the governing body who are going to be able to think very strategically because they do it day to day, who are very capable of critical thinking and making sure that their kids get the very best. I want to say, "We would like a bit of that over there please". We need to be a bit more generous in sharing out those people and saying, "Let us take the accountant from here and let us see if he can help out over there". One of the biggest skills that is needed often as a governor is somebody who is good at mediating as well. We need people with very special skills. I do not believe that all governors should go into a school because they might not have the skills to go in, they might do more harm than good, but they can look after the finances. You also need people skills. You need people who can form a good relationship with the headteacher, who can then act as a critical friend. The headteacher's job I think is very lonely, very isolated, so we need somebody on the governing body who can be there with those skills to support them and say, "Come on, we can do it together". We need to start with the skills that are required on a governing body and I think there are a number of them and we have not always got them.

**Mr Pollard**

157. I applaud anybody who wants to be a school governor and who is a school governor. I was one for donkeys' years. I am not now. I can go back to the time when you just used to turn up three times a year and eat the cucumber sandwiches and say how good the headteacher was. Now governors have huge responsibilities, hiring and firing and all of that. Interestingly enough, school governors form the biggest form of unpaid voluntary service in the country, and it is a strength of our civil society. When the Committee was out in Russia recently the Russian Duma and others were very interested in this mass of voluntary effort that went into managing schools. Could I also say, Fran, that what you said was the clearest exposition of a governor and what is required that I have ever heard. I am glad it is noted down because I think that can be used as a model for being what a governor is, so I congratulate you on that. Can I pursue the Forum? I am particularly interested in that, whether it works well, what are the good bits of it and whether there are things that you might like to do that you think you could do as a Forum that you are not being allowed to do either by the LEA or by central government strictures or just because you have not got the time or energy. Can I finally say that I was a magistrate for donkeys' years. I do not do it now; I am on the supplementary list. If you were a magistrate you could get money for loss of earnings. I wondered if you might pursue that as a way of reward, just for a few days. That might be a way of helping, certainly widening the net of those who might be captured as a governor.

(Mrs Stevens) It is beginning to work more effectively. It has taken us a while to do it. The reason I think it is beginning to be more effective is that we have now succeeded in recruiting governors from across the city which does reflect our city. In the early days that was not the case. We have worked hard on doing that. We are listened to by the local education authority. We do want to begin to influence policy at a local level and we are very keen, once we see ourselves doing that, to feed more into the National Governors' Council, who I know are sitting behind me, so that we begin to get our voices heard. We produce our own newsletter, which is more like a magazine, and it goes out to all governors and the LEA has helped us in doing that. That has been a very good way of trying to communicate with governors across the city because what we found was hard was getting them out to extra meetings.

158. So you are not alone as a body?

(Mr Gillard) I think Kerry Pollard's suggestion of relating it to the magistrate system for getting some sort of compensation is an excellent one because, although even as far as expenses are concerned, governing bodies are allowed to have a section in their budget that allows payment for expenses, there is this feeling among many governors, and I am not sure that it is a true one, that if you take some expenses out you are preventing so many extra textbooks or library books for the kids themselves. Because nobody draws expenses nobody feels they ought to draw expenses and that to some extent relates to the type of person you have got as a

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[Continued

**[Mr Pollard Cont]**

governor, the majority of whom you want, but you also want the sort of people who perhaps desperately need their expenses if nothing else.

**Chairman**

159. We had some parents in here last evening talking to us. They were in a sense suggesting that there was not enough interaction between parents and this new organisation you have of governors across Birmingham education authority. Do you think your new organisation is strategic enough? What we are not getting in a sense is a kind of overview from someone who comes in here and says, "Okay; here is the map of Birmingham"—and what we are realising is how big this education authority is—"and here are the strengths and weaknesses from the consumer's point of view." Last night, because we had an open meeting for parents who had no organisational responsibilities or status, they came in and said, "If you live one side of Birmingham and you want education for your daughter in a girls' school, wonderful, loads of it", and in fact some were very critical of the size of your school, Roy. "It is much too big," they said, "it ruins the balance of other schools which have become almost boys' schools", because so many girls go to your school. But on the other hand they said that at the other side of the city forget education for girls in single sex institutions. I wonder if there is a role for you as a growing organisation to have (a) a better relationship with parents and (b) perhaps a more strategic view of where you want the authority to go?

(*Mr Gillard*) Can I just say as background, as far as the fact that there are a couple of large all-girls' schools is concerned, it is brought about by the ethnic mix situation with the Moslems who are most anxious for girls to go to an all-girls' school.

160. Members of this Committee were quite puzzled to hear that there was such a large school. We admire anyone who can run a school as large as that.

(*Mr Gillard*) It is run very efficiently, in fact.

161. How many pupils are there?

(*Mr Gillard*) There are 1,750 for this existing year.

162. The largest girls' school in Europe, you said.

(*Mr Gillard*) Yes. It comes about from a merger, in fact, going back to the days when grammar schools ceased to be, of the grammar school and the secondary modern school and an early sixth form college.

163. Many of us represent areas with pretty high ethnic minority populations but we do not have girls' schools.

(*Mr Gillard*) There is just the demand when people send in for admissions for these girls' schools by the Moslem communities.

(*Mrs Coke*) I think it is true though that there is an abundance of the type of school that has just been spoken about on one side of the city and not enough on the other side. That has been a big issue within the city, hence the setting up of the first Moslem school. I think it is for those reasons that the Moslem school was set up. There is a role for the Forum and, as Fran said, this re-launched Forum is beginning to develop a focus. It will also come back down to yet another

meeting for yet some other governors to go to. That will also create a problem. At the moment the Forum is financed by £50 from each school. It also needs more money going into the school from the authority—I am not quite sure if they have put extra money in; I am not quite sure what the finances are for that—to be able to do some of the things that need to be done. At the moment we produce a newsletter about four times a year and that newsletter goes to every governor in the city to their personal address, and if you are a governor you may also be a parent governor, so there is a mix there and it does get into the school. What is not happening at the moment is to try and get to those parents through another mechanism. A system needs to be in place where, if there is an issue coming up that we need to take on board, then we can take that on board. We used to hold on a quarterly basis meetings in different areas of the city where we invited governors. What we need then to do is to look at how we begin to put something in place that we can present or do a presentation on to the whole school or groups of schools instead of just looking at governors because it was only for governors, trying to glean the views and aspirations and issues that are coming from the governing body. The intention was that the parent governors on those committees would then be able to go back to their schools and disseminate that information. The newsletter goes out on the Birmingham *Grid for Learning*. There is a website. We obviously need to do some more work in trying to get to those parents.

**Ms Munn**

164. What range of training does the local education authority provide for school governors?

(*Mrs Stevens*) I have to say they do provide excellent training. You name it, they will cover it, from financial management to managing the new code of practice to appointing headteachers. The quality of training—I do not know if my colleagues would agree with me—is excellent. Where the problem lies is, because money has not been earmarked in the school budget for training for governors, as Monica said a while back, often governors feel as though they are depriving the school if they use that money for training and I think the money needs to be clearly earmarked and therefore the headteacher can say, "We must not carry forward an underspend. There is money here for training and you need to go and spend it." I know schools where they say, "We cannot spend it because there is already a shortage of money".

(*Mr Gillard*) I think there is a sum that is ring fenced.

(*Mrs Coke*) It is in the standards fund. It can be spent and some schools do spend it.

(*Mrs Stevens*) Obviously you are spending it, Roy, and that is probably in a school where it is ring fenced. But if it is not clearly ring fenced it can be used for other things. I think that governors should all be encouraged to go on training because there is so much to do.

165. Given that, because my experience is very similar in two local authorities, training for governors that is available is excellent, is enough

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[Continued

**[Ms Munn Cont]**

made of that in terms of making people aware of the fact that training is available? I was scared when I became a governor of the responsibility I was taking on but, having had the initial training, I suddenly thought, "That is fine because I am going to get the support". As well as training, just going out to recruit people, is it made clear that this level of training is available to support people once they become a governor?

(Mrs Stevens) The city is trying very hard to make sure that that training is accessible to all and that it can be delivered in very non-threatening ways as well. We have got whole school training going on. I know through talking to governors that some governors can feel quite intimidated. It is like the fear of going back to the classroom, "Will I be given a pen and paper? Might they spot that I do not spell very well? Will I be asked to do that?" In fact, none of that ever takes place in training but it can be a fear. I think that local authorities can say, "We can come in and do whole school training; thereby you will get it." It is good, what goes on in Birmingham.

(Mrs Coke) I will support that. You cannot fault the training for governors that takes place. My only concern is that training should be given to people who may be interested in becoming governors as opposed to waiting for them to agree to be governors. If you begin to train and have a pool of people who are interested so you give them that taste and understanding of what the role is, it will probably then help their thinking and understanding that when they do get into the role, instead of thinking, "Oh, this is too much for me. I am frightened. I did not know what I was taking on. I am out."

**Chairman**

166. Sort of taster courses?

(Mrs Coke) Yes, although when we asked a question about that we were told that it comes down to money and there was not the money there for that.

**Mr Chaytor**

167. If the Forum is successfully re-launched and gains great influence and takes on amore strategic role, there could well be occasions where the interests of your individual school will be at odds with the needs of the wider community and the position of the Governors' Forum. If there were such a conflict of interest, where the case put by your individual school was clearly causing problems for neighbouring schools, would you put your own school's interests first or the interests of the Governors' Forum first?

(Mrs Coke) We would not do that ourselves. We would go out to consultation, I think.

168. Who would you consult?

(Mrs Stevens) As members of the Forum Executive we already often sit in on committees in the city, on admissions, school organisation and so on, where you are having to make decisions which will not please some of the governors. You may be saying, "I think this school should merge because we are taking a view that that is the way forward for that school".

169. If I can give an example, if the issue to be considered by the Governors' Forum was the merger of a number of schools of which yours was one, and if your headteacher and the rest of the governing body were against a merger, how would you deal with that?

(Mr Gillard) I do not think the Forum could ever have executive powers in that sense at all.

170. If the Forum is going to take on a wider role it will have to grapple with these broader issues and it does not have executive powers but it would be expected to express an opinion or make a recommendation.

(Mrs Stevens) If it was a merger of a school and you happened to sit on the Forum and your school was going down that road and you did not want it to be, the committee that was making that decision as to whether it merged or not would be the school organisation committee. If you sat on that committee I think you should say you have a vested interest and that it should be another member who sits on that.

171. I understand that. Leave aside sitting on other committees. I am interested in the clash of responsibilities or the clash of loyalties for individual governors sitting on the Governors' Forum. If the Governors' Forum is going to have some teeth or some influence it is going to have to engage with these wider issues and this is where the conflict between your role as a representative of the Governors' Forum and your role as an individual member of the governing body of your own school could well come into conflict.

(Mr Gillard) If that did arise one would declare an interest.

172. But would you still vote for your own school?

(Mr Gillard) You would express your own personal view.

(Mrs Coke) I think you would have to go case by case and you would have to look at what is best at the time prevailing and, if you are being truthful about it, whether you are on the Governors' Forum or within your school, you are going to be stating the same thing anyway.

Chairman: I think that is a brilliant point to make, Monica.

**Paul Holmes**

173. My question is partly a follow-on from the point David was asking, about clashes of interest. If there is a clash between the governors of a school and the LEA or the school or whatever, how is that resolved? For example, last night we had two parents sitting there who were former governors of Washwood Heath and we have another one who is sitting there now who is a former governor of Washwood Heath. What was all that about and how was that resolved between the LEA, the school and governors, most of whom appear to have resigned?

(Mrs Stevens) I was a governor who came on to it.

**Chairman**

174. I suspect this answer could be very long.

(Mrs Stevens) What went on there? Is that the question you ask?

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[Continued

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**Paul Holmes**

175. Yes, how did the governors, the LEA and the school resolve whatever that issue was?

(Mrs Stevens) How did it or how should it? I think that at that school there was a classic example of the need for mediation to take place to understand where people were coming from. No blame attached to anybody, I would say, because it was about trying to listen and learn from everybody. That is where I think there needed to be that really skilful mediation.

176. The two former governors who were here last night were very cross about whatever it was that happened. They felt very hard done to.

(Mrs Stevens) We have to listen, do we not? We have to listen to the community.

177. But they felt they had not been listened to.

(Mrs Stevens) Who knows?

Chairman: I do not think we are going to get much further. Can I say how grateful we are for your time, for the frank way that you have answered our questions, the forceful way you have answered our questions, and that it has been a pleasure. Every time someone comes in front of our Committee they nearly always, they tell me, when they get in their car, get on the bus, or walk home, they say, "I wish I had said that". You have only got to drop us a line and we will add your remarks to this part of our evidence. Thank you.

THURSDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2002

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Members present:

Mr Barry Sheerman, in the Chair

Mr David Chaytor  
Valerie Davey  
Jeff Ennis  
Paul Holmes

Ms Meg Munn  
Mr Kerry Pollard  
Jonathan Shaw  
Mr Andrew Turner

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### **Memorandum from Professor David Gillborn and Dr Simon Warren (EB01)**

#### INTRODUCTION

1. In 2001 we were invited, by the Birmingham Race Action Partnership (BRAP), working in collaboration with Birmingham LEA, to review race equality and educational provision in Birmingham. The final report will be published shortly. In this brief memorandum, we will outline some of our principal findings and reflect on their importance for Birmingham and beyond.

#### BIRMINGHAM IN CONTEXT

2. An understanding of diversity and educational attainment in Birmingham is of widespread interest for several reasons:

a. Birmingham is one of the largest education authorities in the country. The sheer number of minority ethnic students in the city means that many of our statistical findings are more soundly based than has been possible in other area-based studies.

b. Demographically, Birmingham is suggestive of where the national pupil population is heading in the future. Around 43 per cent of Birmingham's school students are of minority ethnic heritage. It is estimated that by 2008 there will be no ethnic majority in the city's schools.

c. The LEA has one of the very best statistical units. The amount of information that is gathered, and the detail in which it can be analysed, mean that we can explore issues in Birmingham that remain hidden elsewhere.

3. The LEA has developed a strong national reputation for taking seriously *both* the need to "raise standards" and to increase "equal opportunities". If progress is to be made nationally, there are probably important lessons to be learned from the city's experiences.

#### ACHIEVEMENT AT 16: THE PICTURE NATIONALLY AND LOCALLY

4. Since the mid-1990s, standards of GCSE attainment at 16 have risen *faster* in Birmingham than for the country as a whole: between 1993 and 2001, nationally the proportion attaining five higher grade passes rose by 8.8 percentage points but in Birmingham the improvement has been 14 percentage points. However, students have not all shared equally in these improvements: see table 1.

#### *The gender gap*

5. At age 16, girls in Birmingham are achieving better results than boys in each ethnic group and the gender gap is increasing within each ethnic group.

#### *Ethnic inequalities*

6. For both sexes, African Caribbean children are the *least* likely to attain five higher grade GCSE passes and Indian pupils are the *most* successful.

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TABLE 1: TRENDS IN GCSE PERFORMANCE BY ETHNIC GROUP AND GENDER, BIRMINGHAM 1998—2001 (FIVE OR MORE GCSE HIGHER GRADE (A\*-C) PASSES)

	1998 %	1999 %	2000 %	2001 %	Improvement 1998-2001 %
African Caribbean boys	13	20	19	17	4
African Caribbean girls	28	30	31	34	6
Bangladeshi boys	28	31	30	27	1
Bangladeshi girls	36	40	42	50	14
Indian boys	40	43	49	49	9
Indian girls	50	55	61	65	15
Pakistani boys	21	26	27	31	10
Pakistani girls	31	32	41	42	11
White boys	34	33	36	39	5
White girls	44	45	45	50	6

7. Boys in different ethnic groups have experienced different rates of improvement. Indian and Pakistani boys have improved most. Bangladeshi and African Caribbean boys experienced a *fall* in their attainments between 1999 and 2001. Consequently, inequalities of achievement have grown between white boys and their peers of Bangladeshi and African Caribbean backgrounds.

8. There is a general pattern of improvement for girls in each of the main ethnic groups. However, differences in the rates of girls' improvement, mean that Indian girls are now further ahead of other groups, while African Caribbean girls remain as far behind their white peers as they were in 1998.

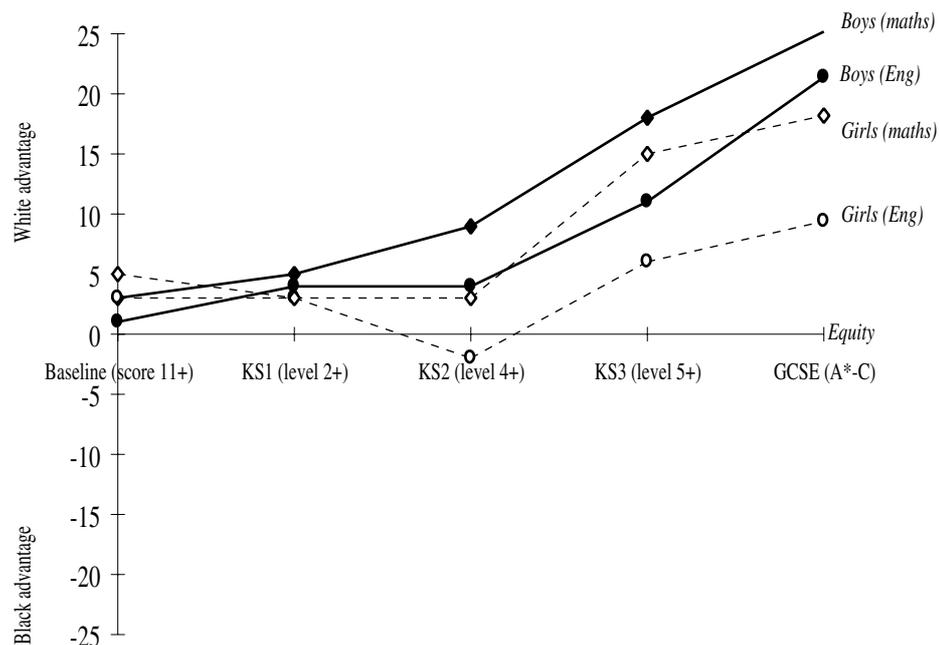
#### ETHNIC ORIGIN AND DIFFERENCES IN PROGRESS 5 TO 16

9. Educational statistics make it possible to examine how different groups of children perform, relative to others, as they move through the school system from age 5 to 16. The quality of statistics in Birmingham mean that we can look at these questions in greater detail than has been possible in any previous research.

10. The data show that despite entering the school system with assessments that are generally in advance of the LEA average, Black pupils experience a dramatic decline in their performance relative to other groups. In other words, pupils in other ethnic groups draw more benefit (make greater progress) during their time in school. This pattern is true for African Caribbean children of both sexes and is visible in both the curriculum areas for which data are available (English/literacy and maths/numeracy).

11. Figure 1 (overleaf) shows the differences in attainment (in English and mathematics) between African Caribbean pupils and their white classmates. Data are available for each of the key stages in compulsory education. In this case, the scores show the proportion of pupils reaching recognised benchmarks at each stage: i.e. a score of 11 or more in the baseline assessments; level 2 or above at Key Stage (KS) 1; level 4 at KS2; level 5 at KS3; and a higher grade GCSE pass (A\*-C) at the end of KS4. If African Caribbean and White pupils were equally likely to attain these scores, the values would be situated along the horizontal axis (which can be thought of as a line of equity). The further a value above (or below) that line, the greater the proportion of White (or African Caribbean) pupils attaining the relevant benchmark. For example, 41.8 per cent of white boys attained a higher grade GCSE in maths, in 2001, compared with 16.6 per cent of African Caribbean boys: consequently, the value for "Boys (maths)" lies 25.2 percentage points above the axis.

12. Figure 1 dramatically highlights several key issues. First, the scale of inequalities in attainment worsens considerably in secondary schools. Second, although the inequalities are worse for African Caribbean boys, there are clear and significant inequalities for Black girls also. Finally, for both sexes, the scale of inequalities is greatest in maths. This is a subject with a long history of academic selection and previous research suggests that such approaches may institutionalise inequality for some students, for example, by restricting them to GCSE papers for which the highest possible grade is a D.



**FIGURE 1: Differences in attainment (baseline to GCSE) for African Caribbean & White Students, Birmingham 2001**

#### EXCLUSIONS FROM SCHOOL

13. Recent years have seen a fall in the number of exclusions nationally and this has also been achieved in Birmingham. Nevertheless, it remains the case that certain minority ethnic groups are more likely to be excluded and the Birmingham data raise new concerns in this area.

a. African Caribbean students are permanently excluded more than twice as often as predicted by their numbers in the Birmingham population. Mixed race (dual heritage) children are over-represented by a factor of 4 in the latest figures: this is the highest rate of over-representation and appears to be worsening each year.

b. The over-representation of African Caribbean and mixed race students is common to boys and girls in both primary and secondary schools.

c. African Caribbean and mixed race students are also over-represented in shorter (fixed term) exclusions. The pattern is repeated for both sexes in primary and secondary schools.

#### PARENTS' PERSPECTIVES

14. Parents' relationship with the education service can be characterised as one of "high investment—low trust". Parents share the city's emphasis on the importance of education but they do not have confidence in the education service's ability to deliver equal opportunities for their sons and daughters. Parents complained that teachers have low expectations of their children which under-estimate their academic potential but exaggerate a potential for causing trouble. They are concerned that racism is not being challenged in schools. In some cases this can lead to worsening problems and a situation where both parents and students see the school as taking the side of white racist pupils.

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**Box 1: A Pakistani Mother's Story**

Her son was facing a great deal of racism at his mainly-white secondary school.

The mother and father wrote a letter regarding this to the chair of Governors, because:

“If we thought the school was dealing with the problem we wouldn't have approached the Governors in the first place”.

The chair of Governors wrote back saying the parents should take the matter up with the Headteacher instead.

The situation for the boy became even more serious after the events of 11 September 2001. The boys' frustration with the lack of a positive response from the school led him to become increasingly aggressive in his own defence. The school's response to this was to issue an 'unofficial' exclusion. Since the boy was about to sit his GCSEs the parents did not have the option of withdrawing him from the school. Instead they had to challenge the school's actions.

15. Minority ethnic parents invest a good deal (of time and money) in additional resources to support their children's learning: this is seen individually, through the use of private tutors, and communally, through the provision of supplementary schools. Birmingham education strategy documents present supplementary schools as part of a joint educational project. But for many parents, especially those of African Caribbean ethnic heritage, the supplementary school system is a sign of the failure of mainstream education and their communities' unwillingness to accept that failure.

16. Parents' views were not universally negative. For example, they expressed support for mentoring programmes, especially where the mentor is seen as operating outside the low expectations and stereotypes that can characterise teachers' views. Nevertheless, it is a matter of concern that even articulate and confident parents feel distant from the structures of influence in education. This is especially worrying in view of the emphasis on “partnership” in the policy texts.

**STUDENTS' VOICES**

17. We spoke with students from a range of different ethnic backgrounds and included those seen by their schools as “high achievers” and some who were seen as being “at risk” of educational failure and/or exclusion. Despite the diversity of student backgrounds and attainment, there was broad agreement on the importance of educational success, especially as a gateway to further and higher education and/or the job market.

18. Students felt that positive relations with schools were vital and made possible by visible investments in them; as evidenced by things like additional classes, high quality resources and pastoral support. A cornerstone of positive relations with the school, and with learning itself, was respectful relations between teacher and student. Being treated as “an adult” was highly prized by students, regardless of their level of attainment (see box 2).

19. Students see respect as a two way process. Teachers who quickly resort to disciplinary sanctions, or fail to engage with the students' perspectives, are sometimes seen as unworthy of respect. In contrast, teachers are highly regarded when they show genuine interest in their subject matter and all their students. Unfortunately, many students report teachers whose interests do not extend equally to all their students.

**MAKING CHANGES: PLANNING, POLICY AND PRACTICE**

20. We examined a wide range of policy documents that identify positive and challenging goals for education in the city (what we call, *the intended strategy*). However, these conscious goals are not always delivered in practice, where actual behaviour (*the realised strategy*) seems to be shaped by wider constraints.

**Box 2: Student Perspectives**

“The ones [teachers] who don't respect you, you don't do the work.” (High Achieving Pakistani Girl).

“If something's happened, when you know it's not your fault, and the teacher's saying it was, you raise your voice because of what happened. They say you must treat the teacher with courtesy and respect, but if the teacher can't do that to you, what's the point of having the rules?” (“At Risk” African Caribbean Boy).

“The teacher in History, straight to your work, straight in to start work. But in Maths, you just keep on, keep on, keep on, just going round the bush, not starting the lesson. Like, when people just messing around [the teacher] just leaves them to do what they want and just teaches the ones he wants to teach.” (“At Risk” African Caribbean Boy).

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#### THE INTENDED STRATEGY

21. In order to support school based improvement, a key role for the LEA is the identification, support and sharing of “good practice” and building effective partnerships. The LEA achievement strategy is aimed at supporting school-based processes based on a school improvement and effectiveness model. This approach has received considerable support and school effectiveness principles have been widely disseminated across the authority.

22. The content and direction of equality strategies in Birmingham tends to be shaped by national strategies, such as *Excellence in Cities* (EiC) and the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies. In relation to equal opportunities, the LEA has identified the *Excellence in Cities* programme as the main vehicle through which the closing of the attainment gap and increased inclusion is to be achieved. In Birmingham, *Excellence in Cities* contains clear race equality indicators that set important and ambitious targets. For example, EiC Partnership targets include the aim to *double* the rate of improvement of boys from African Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Pakistani ethnic backgrounds. These ambitious approaches include requiring schools to set differential improvement targets, which (if realised) would close the existing “equality gap” between pupils from different ethnic groups.

#### THE REALISED STRATEGY

23. In practice, Birmingham’s improvement strategy is delivered by a multiplicity of discrete initiatives, many of them determined by national government. In this context it is unclear how a clear focus on race equality is maintained when Birmingham’s achievement strategy is dispersed across such a wide range of initiatives. Although *Excellence in Cities* includes a range of race equality indicators, for example, these are not evenly spread across the different strands of activity. Some strands have no explicit race equality indicators at all. *The complexity of the delivery mechanisms, and the dispersal of responsibility between so many different people and agencies, is highly problematic. It means that it is difficult to ensure that race equality features prominently in all schools’ concerns and informs the way they deliver the range of improvement strategies.* In practice, an “implementation gap” has emerged.

24. Birmingham LEA has demonstrated its leadership capacity by making the “Processes of Successful Schools and School Improvement” the common language of improvement in the city’s schools. The LEA, and in particular CEO Tim Brighouse, have been proactive in driving these principles as the basis for improving the quality of education. Similar leadership needs to be provided to ensure that the race equality agenda becomes as embedded in the common-sense practice of teachers on a daily basis. Because of its size and ethnic diversity, Birmingham is often seen as a model for how others should respond to these issues: if the city is to live up to this promise, the LEA needs to be more proactive in driving and widening understanding of the race equality agenda.

*Professor David Gillborn and Dr Simon Warren*

*September 2002*

#### Examination of Witnesses

PROFESSOR DAVID GILLBORN, Institute of Education, University of London, and DR SIMON WARREN, South Bank University, were examined.

#### Chairman

178. Dr Simon Warren and Professor David Gillborn, we welcome you to our proceedings. I am surprised that you got here in one piece given that you are both academics from London and, having had dinner last night with the three Birmingham universities, they might have felt that they would be wanting to lay in wait and question you. Thank you very much for joining us. You join us at a time when we are at last getting the feel that we have got somewhat under the skin of Birmingham educational provision. There is no doubt that all of would confess that some of the prejudices and conceptions we had are now seen as prejudices and misconceptions now that we have had a chance to dip into a lot of schools and talk to a lot of people at every level—parents, teachers, governors, politicians. We have really immersed ourselves in the education of one city. We have also taken some interesting evidence not only

from governors and parents and others but also across the piste, from the African Caribbean community, from the Asian community of different kinds—Bangladesh and Pakistan and so on—but getting the right scope. Some of us went to the primary school that is a play school here on Tuesday morning and of course we were told that even at a primary school like that there are 24 nationalities. Whatever we have done this week certainly is not up to that broadness of scope. We have talked to teachers and heads and others about a whole range of things. This morning, for example, we were with the PRU talking about their policies. We are learning a bit, but now we are asking you for your professional opinion because, as you know, we have started a year-long look at secondary education and we are looking at different parts of that and one is diversity, whether the Government’s diversity agenda will deliver good value for taxpayers’ money, whether it will deliver higher standards in education

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in the secondary sector. We are looking at admissions; we are looking at more difficult to teach students and those students who find it more difficult to achieve under the present system, and we are looking at teacher recruitment and retention. Given all that, would either of you like to say anything to start the proceedings or would you like just to respond to questions?

(*Professor Gillborn*) It might be useful if we say a few things to refresh your memory about the four or five sides of A4 that we submitted. That is based on a year-long project that we have been doing, looking at race equality across Birmingham. The thing that attracted us to the work was that in many ways Birmingham gives us a lens on some issues that are also broader than just for this one city: the size of the population, some of the demographic trends, and also the quality of the data that Birmingham LEA collects. In many ways the city gives us sight of some trends that are probably in existence much beyond Birmingham but in other LEAs the data just is not there to examine the issues. I am sure lots of people have been telling you about the improvements in standards in Birmingham, particularly since the mid nineties. One of the things we drew attention to in that review was that the overall improvement at GCSE has been more rapid in Birmingham than nationally since the mid nineties. Unfortunately, given the specific focus that we had in that project, that improvement in standards has not been shared equally among the different minority ethnic groups, and in particular African Caribbean students have not shared equally in that. One of the other pieces of evidence which we tried to summarise in as few words as possible in those sheets of A4 was some data that indicates that the inequalities in attainment between different groups actually changes as kids' move through school. We presented a graph looking at the difference in attainment between white students and African Caribbean students at the key stages throughout education. That indicates that the inequalities in attainment actually worsen as the students move through school and are at their greatest as the students are taking their GCSE examinations. That seems to confirm some of the worries that were being expressed to us by different minority ethnic communities, both as the project was set up but also then as the project continued. One of the things that we tried to do was to look at the views of different stakeholders and Simon took care of that particular issue.

(*Dr Warren*) One of the things that we feel is quite important to share with you on the policy side is the way that we perceive the tension between national strategies and local strategies. One of the distinctive features of Birmingham is its radical commitment to closing the equality gap. What we found, however, was that this often came into tension with the impulse and drive of national strategies so that increasingly, although the authority have wanted to integrate national initiatives, such as *Excellence in Cities*, literacy and numeracy strategies, into their own distinctive local improvement strategy, there is very little distinction between the national strategy agenda and the local strategy agenda. We feel that this in part undermines the attempt locally to close the attainment gap. In particular, although there are key equality indicators within strategies such as

*Excellence in Cities*, there is a problem here in terms of the consistency of equality indicators across different strands, for instance, and in fact in some strands there is no explicit reference to race equality at all. The evaluation process is dispersed, although it is a bit tidier now than it was, and there is no clear leverage in the hands of the local authority on the *Excellence in Cities* partnerships and the schools themselves. Consequently there is an implementation gap and the authority is trying to set out a strategy that contains within it a strong commitment to race equality, but at the level of the schools where the improvement is actually delivered something else goes on quite often and, although the teachers are working very hard and the head teachers are very committed, the thing that really levers them, that puts influence on them, is the national agenda and the spotlight put on schools to demonstrate year on year meeting certain targets. Our fear is that this does not always complement their commitment to closing the attainment gap. Also across the authority there was what was mentioned in a recent Government report—management by initiative. There was a complex delivery mechanism in delivering the race equality strategy dispersed across a whole range of different discrete initiatives, large and small, national and local, with no clear cohesion or co-ordination of that strategy. Our fear is that it gets lost in that. Consequently, although the parents and students we talked to were in accordance with the local authority in terms of the value of education, the value of commitment to education, the value of learning as a gateway to future success and life chances, they often experienced something that was quite divergent from the commitment set out by the authority. For instance, the experience of parents could be characterised as that of high achievement, low trust. A massive amount of personal and community investment in education and the diversity and range of supplementary schools in the city is an indication of that communal investment in education, but it is also an indicator of how those communities feel that the mainstream education service has failed them, that they have personally and collectively got to invest so much in supplementary forms of education.

179. I am not quite sure what "supplementary" means. Do you mean in the Asian community religious instruction in the evenings or at weekends?

(*Dr Warren*) No. We mean Saturday or evening schools that are directly geared towards the mainstream curriculum, so they often involve instruction on mathematics, English, science, and this is what there is in Birmingham and other cities. One of the things that both parents and students reported to us was a consistent experience of being met with low academic expectations of them. Parents would talk to us about how they felt that schools had low academic expectations of their children, and many of the students felt the same, but where there was an exaggeration of minority ethnic students' potential to cause trouble and the presence of minority ethnic students in the exclusions figures is perhaps a test or indicator of that experience. There was also some concern around the way that schools were to slow to respond to white racism, particularly after September 11, despite there being in place quite

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clear guidance and instructions on how to respond to harassment and to the post-September 11 situation. These are just some of the factors we have found.

**Mr Chaytor**

180. On this question of supplementary education, I do not quite see how what you have described is necessarily a consequence of a sense of failure of the system. How is that different from middle class parents employing private tutors to get their kids into Oxford? It does not necessarily imply loss of faith in the system. It is purely a result of the competitive pressures and the desire to encourage your kids to succeed, is it not?

*(Professor Gillborn)* It is clearly a reflection of a great investment in education, particularly amongst minority communities. Historically immigrant communities have tended to view education as one of the key ladders towards social betterment but the history of supplementary schools in black communities, particularly in African Caribbean communities, goes back decades.

181. It is not something new?

*(Professor Gillborn)* It is not a thing linked to the post-1988—

182. You cannot identify it as a result of the failure of the system at the moment?

*(Professor Gillborn)* No. If you look at the history of supplementary education it is usually tied to the historic failure of the education system, not just in Birmingham but nationally, in terms of black students, that many supplementary schools began with one person teaching a group of students in their front room and these have gradually built up. I do not know if anyone knows the precise figure but there are hundreds if not thousands of black supplementary schools nationally which provide an important source of extra tuition.

183. There are hundreds if not thousands of private teachers visiting the homes of parents in Islington every night of the week. What is the difference? Middle class parents will say that this is because they really want to encourage their children to aspire. Why is it black parents saying that it is because they have no faith in the system?

*(Dr Warren)* The picture that you have painted there is of a group of middle class aspirant parents who are responding to a very competitive situation, who want their children to go to Oxford or Cambridge or a higher status university, which is quite different in intention from black communities in Birmingham and other cities who are responding to historic and endemic experience of under-achievement. It is not the same.

184. Okay; let me put a specific question. If they did not have these supplementary schools would you conclude that they were 100 per cent satisfied with the state system or would you say that this was an indication of their lack of interest in and their alienation from the mainstream system? What conclusion would you draw?

*(Dr Warren)* It is the perspective of those parents themselves that their investment in supplementary forms of education, including private tuition, is a direct response to the failure of the mainstream system.

185. Where is that documented? Is that documented in your research or is that more a judgement?

*(Dr Warren)* There is research on documenting the experience—

186. Where is that research and can you provide the evidence to the Committee that concludes that?

*(Dr Warren)* I can give you references, yes.

187. That would be very useful. How do you view the performance of ethnic minority kids as affected by the fragmented system of education in Birmingham, the fact that there is so much selection in the system, either exclusive or inclusive? Do you think that has any impact whatsoever? Does it serve to increase the achievement gap between black and white or does it serve to reduce the achievement gap between black and white?

*(Professor Gillborn)* I think in many respects there is not sufficient data to examine all of the different influences that are suggested by a question like that in terms of the different types of schools, selective, non-selective, single-sex, all the rest of it. What is very clear from evidence, not just from our research but nationally, is that when you have a system which selects according to some standard of ability and/or behaviour, be it selection into a different school or selection to different classes within a school, the overwhelming evidence both from this country and from North America is that those systems tend to disadvantage particular groups—working class students, African Caribbean students, also certain groups with English as an additional language, that those kinds of selective systems tend to put additional barriers in the way of achievement.

**Jeff Ennis**

188. We saw a very interesting case study yesterday at a school called Four Dwellings Comprehensive School which is in a predominantly white working class area on the edge of town and they bus in quite a lot of African Caribbean kids from the centre of town because, as you know, a lot of the schools in the centre of town have been demolished to make way for economic regeneration projects. It is a school that is improving and it has got quite a good record of achievement in improvement terms. The one thing that stood out in the record of achievement of improvement was the fact that the boys were performing just as well as the girls in academic terms. I asked them what was the reason for that and how had they achieved this conundrum that we are all facing and trying to resolve. The head said that the reason for that was that the African Caribbean kids that were being bussed to the school were making that much more effort to go to this school because they bypassed about four or five other comprehensives to get to this particular school, so therefore they felt they had more parental support than other African Caribbean kids, and it was the African Caribbean boys that were bringing the

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**[Jeff Ennis Cont]**

record of academic achievement up to that of the girls. It was not the white working class lads who lived around the school that were doing that; it was the black African Caribbean boys. What do you think that tells us?

(*Professor Gillborn*) I think it is very interesting when you look at a situation like that and compare it with what the students and parents were saying to us. We virtually universally came across students who genuinely wanted to succeed in education, parents who were desperate to see their sons and daughters doing well but were often complaining that the schools had diametrically opposed expectations, did not expect kids to succeed. What strikes me as interesting there is that you are speaking with teachers at a school who have a different view of the African Caribbean students. They have a view of the students as coming ready to learn, as being highly motivated, which sounds very different from the views of teachers who we were being told about. Whilst the school's explanation may be that it is a different kind of black student, the students' explanation might well be that it is a different kind of school. It is a school that thinks black students are highly motivated. The independent variable, the thing that makes the difference, might actually be the expectations of the school, that the school thinks, "If these kids are coming from miles across the city they have got the commitment to learn", which might be there in other city schools but may not be recognised.

189. In my simplistic naivety as a Member of Parliament from Barnsley, what that means is that the more important parents consider their kids' education the more important a factor that is in terms of the achievement of their child's success, and it is quite clearly one of the major factors we have to try and bring about in every school within the authorities—parental involvement in their kids' education.

(*Professor Gillborn*) I think that is absolutely right. All the evidence nationally supports that, but also clearly indicates that if you compare like with like most minority ethnic communities, including African Caribbean families, tend to have a higher level of commitment to education, support their kids staying in education longer and make greater sacrifices than equivalent white families. In many cases there is what Simon was talking about as high investment/low trust. There is a real untapped vein of high expectations and commitment in many of these minority ethnic communities.

**Paul Holmes**

190. There has been a lot of debate in the national press over this issue and one black university academic whose name I cannot remember argued that it is far too simplistic just to say that schools were being racist because you could see, he argued, distinct differences according to what particular group people came from. We were looking in detail at the Birmingham schools admissions figures earlier this week, broken down by ethnic grouping, and we visited King Edward VI Camphill Technology College, which is a former grammar school and we found that they take over half of their pupils from ethnic minorities, which is bigger than the proportion

for the area, so you certainly could not say that that school is being racist because it is taking more ethnic minority kids than white kids. When you break down their admissions by ethnic group you have got high numbers of Indians, high numbers of Sikhs, and you have got very low, almost non-existent numbers of Bangladeshis and African-Caribbeans, for example. That would seem to support the argument that you cannot just say it is racism. You have got to look at social class, deprivation, etc, and you have got to look perhaps at culture as well and parental support because there are clear differences between ethnic groups, not just between white and ethnic groups.

(*Professor Gillborn*) There are many factors involved in this. Social class is one of the key ones. When you try and understand the performance of any group social class is the first variable you need to look at. However, when you say it is not as simple as racism, very often there is a tendency to assume that racism is simple. Very often when white people hear the word "racism" they tend to think of the BNP, they think about the people that killed Stephen Lawrence, but the Stephen Lawrence inquiry pointed out that racism involves a whole variety of actions and assumptions, many of which are well intentioned. There is an awful lot of research in education suggesting that particularly white teachers' assumptions of different minority groups differ. It is not the case that if a teacher assumes that African Caribbean students will be badly behaved they automatically assume that all students who are not white will be badly behaved. The same teacher may have exaggerated expectations of, for example, Indian students or Chinese students. Stereotypes do not always work in one direction. They often are contradictory. Part of the problem with the term "racism" is the way in which we use the term. In a room like this, if there are 20 people there might be 20 different assumptions about what we are talking about. The evidence from schools increasingly suggests that racism in that very crude form, the kind of Alf Garnett racism, has virtually disappeared from the staff room, but racism in terms of different expectations about behaviour, about attainment, the evidence suggests is still quite commonplace. The way in which that works through decisions about which group a kid is going to be taught in, which subject is more or less appropriate when they come to choose their GCSE options, which tier of exam they are going to be entered in (which can set a limit on the grades they can gain), is that those decisions are quite mundane, they are not dramatic, obviously racist incidents, but they are decisions which over time tend to work against particular minority ethnic groups. If we are talking about racism we need to remember that usually in schools it is that more mundane, subtle sort of racism rather than the headline grabbing kind.

191. But in this particular case you have got a school that is admitting children on the basis of an academic test and it is taking in more ethnic minority children than white children, the reverse of the population make-up of Birmingham, for example, and it is taking in considerable numbers of certain ethnic groups and not others. It is not just a matter of taking in Asians but not black minority groups, for example, because it is also distinguishing between

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**[Paul Holmes Cont]**

different groups of Asians. That is being done by an objective academic test, not by selection in the sense of people deciding, "We will have you, you and you but not you".

(*Professor Gillborn*) You use the phrase "objective academic test". Part of the historical way in which apparently objective things have worked against particular communities is not just because of ethnicity, linguistic issues or social class which you mentioned, but because certain communities have more access to preparing for certain kinds of tests and assessment. We know that historically, for at least 50 years if not a century, certain kinds of cognitive tests, which some people at the moment view as a way of getting past stereotypes, have systematically worked against black people. I think the objectivity or fair nature of tests cannot always be taken for granted in terms of class as well as ethnicity.

192. Given that you are saying that there is a lot of evidence of Afro-Caribbeans, for example, putting a lot of money and effort into after hours coaching for their kids, why is that not making a difference on the numbers of that group who are passing these tests and who have been coached for that? Why are we not therefore seeing an improvement following through from that if it is as widespread as you say, that in the evenings there are hundreds and thousands of these coaching schools across the country?

(*Professor Gillborn*) They are not coaching schools towards particular fixed tests. I am not an expert on supplementary schools but my understanding is that they are schools focusing if you like on the basics, schools trying to ensure that, in particular, levels of numeracy and literacy are good. One of the interesting things from the data in this city and from other areas is that often at age five, six, seven, black students are performing as well as, if not better than, the LEA average. It is not that there is a deficit in performance which needs to be made up but that those inequalities in attainment appear as the students move through the schools. That is one of the most disturbing findings, not just from Birmingham but more widely.

(*Dr Warren*) It might be worth, as an attempt to try and answer your question, trying to compare the intake and the GCSE outcomes of those students compared to other selective schools in the city where the intake is mainly white and asking questions about why those schools do not have that proportion of students from minority ethnic communities given that something like at present 43 per cent of the school population are from minority ethnic communities. That might go some way to trying to address some of what you are saying. We do not have that answer here but that might be quite a useful way of looking at what are the different dynamics going on in those contrasting but similar schools.

#### Valerie Davey

193. What you have just said indicates that school is damaging to those children's education. I think that statistics or graphs which Estelle showed us a little while back in terms of income and ability also showed the same trends, so children with low ability and low income do progressively badly and children with high income but low ability do better than low

income and high ability. There is a crossover at about the age of six or seven which indicates that school is quite damaging, if you look at it crudely. That is an appalling thing to say. Is that really what you are saying in terms of ethnic minority groups in Birmingham?

(*Professor Gillborn*) "School is damaging" may be the wrong way of viewing it. School is not equally good for everyone. I am not playing with semantics. The idea that school is not good for anyone is potentially quite dangerous. What is very clear from the evidence, and it sounds like the data that you are quoting is another example of this, is that schools are much better for certain students; they are much better for middle class students, they are much better for students who they identify as having ability. The problem with ability is that when you actually go into schools and see how that is identified, it is often identified on the basis of social cues. Schools are good at identifying students from particular kinds of background and then treating them differently, even schools that are absolutely committed to delivering equal opportunities and closing inequalities in attainment. One of the most important findings from the last decade or so is that the increased pressure, not just at the school level from headteachers and governors but at LEA level and at national level through the league tables, to deliver better standards in terms that can be measured has led teachers more and more to differentiate between different groups of students: "Where will we get the most return for our efforts?" When you look at how those decisions are made, it tends to be that working class students, black students, students with English as an additional language, are viewed as the students where the return on the extra investment, the time, is not going to show up in the league tables, it is not going to show up in the SATS. We need to focus on these kids at the borderline. One of the consequences of that is that some of these inequalities actually get worse.

194. So you are exacerbating the problem. Part of it is perception; part of it is the time and effort spent on those who give a quicker or easier return?

(*Professor Gillborn*) When you increase pressure on the system the system responds in ways that it feels comfortable with. The system responds along the lines that it has always used to identify who are the kids with ability, who are the motivated kids. Therefore some of these stereotypes are then given even more power as schools increasingly look to set by ability, look to differentiate between where the resources are placed. It is largely done on a colour blind basis. People do not say, "We need to put all the black kids in the bottom group". They say, "There are certain kids who are not going to make it so they have to go in the bottom group." It just so happens that when you look in the bottom group you have a disproportionate number usually of African Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Pakistani students. It is a process which you can see at work not just in the classroom but nationally. The major reforms have not focused on race equality as a key issue. There has been an assumption historically, not just for the last ten years but for the last 20 or 30 years, that as you raise standards everyone will share in that. All of the

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**[Valerie Davey Cont]**

evidence suggests that unless you try and make sure that people share equally most of the benefit will be taken by the groups that have always done best.

**Chairman**

195. What I am not getting clear from the paper that I have seen, and I know that it is only an abstract from your piece of work is this. We have been going round all these schools and we have been talking to all these people. What I want to know in a sense is how do I compare poor students from all backgrounds? I do not want them to be mixed up with all other students. I want to know in the lowest social class how whites, blacks, African Caribbeans, Bangladeshi students compare. Have you done that in your survey? It is different when taking all the people in schools and saying, "Okay, it ends up that there are more African Caribbean non-achievers". It seems to me that we have got to know that because otherwise some of the evidence that we have taken so far suggests that there is a complex mix. Someone came up to us today in the PRU; she was the liaison person for parents, and she said, "So many people who end up here are the people who lack the parental role models, the backing, the support at home, the books at home, the environment of people sitting down and reading even a newspaper". It is complex. Some of the things you have said today put a question mark over schools and schooling and teachers whereas what we have seen this week, certainly I have seen, has surely to do with parenting and support and a whole host of other things.

*(Professor Gillborn)* Yes, absolutely.

196. I am worried. I have seen all these dedicated teachers and I am worried that it is the teachers and the school environment where students spend 17 per cent of their time.

*(Professor Gillborn)* You are absolutely right in terms of the complex nature of the various factors that are at work here. There is a tendency when people talk about education to talk only about gender, the boys under-achieving issue, or to focus only on class or to focus only on race and ethnicity, when all of us have gender and class and race ethnicity and sexuality. The problem when you start to try and map these different influences across each other is that very quickly the size of the sample that you are looking at starts to shrink. The best evidence that I have seen nationally which tries to hold these different things in view at the same time suggests very clearly that if you want to predict how well a student will do, find out their social class. That is the best single predictor, not their gender, not their ethnicity. Once you know their social class, ethnicity then becomes critical. While it is true that nationally an African Caribbean student of middle class background is much more likely to go to university, to get five high grade passes, than a working class African Caribbean student of the same gender, that middle class black student is not as likely to be successful as a middle class student from an Indian family, a white family or even Bangladeshi family. Class of course takes lots of different background measures and bundles them together, and although class is obviously critically important, it does not explain away all of these other variations.

197. No, no. What I am pushing you on, David, is that as we went round, and I think most of the Committee would agree with what I am saying on this, the most flagged up group which seemed to be difficult to teach, which was under-achieving, needing special measures to keep them in school and perhaps exclude them, was white working class boys. It came to us time and time again, even going round and seeing the people who were having disciplinary problems and being interviewed and so on. It just seemed to be almost in your face that this was the group that they were most concerned about. I do not believe they are prejudiced about them. We heard much less about any problems in teaching and being involved in the educational process of African Caribbean boys.

*(Professor Gillborn)* I think it is absolutely vital to keep class in view. When I talked about the processes at work, particularly in secondary schools but increasingly in primaries, around selection within the school, different sets, different bands, different tiers, I did mention working class students because the evidence suggests that white working class students face very similar processes, very similar sets of expectations, that when they open their mouths, when they arrive for lessons and they are bedraggled or they are not adequately dressed, a set of expectations about what they are capable of doing comes into play. They are just as deeply rooted as the sets of expectations that come into play when three African Caribbean students are seen on a corridor and very often teachers think, "Oh, there is a gang", whereas three white kids might not be a gang. Three white kids might be a group of kids. I am not for a moment suggesting that these issues only work around race and ethnicity. Class is another one, another modality through which these issues sometimes operate.

**Mr Pollard**

198. Bob Dowling, who is the headteacher of the George Dixon School, and who has absolutely transformed the school, there is no doubt about that, said to us this morning that he believed that refugees—and he has a lot in his school—are better in mainstream schools than being taught separately. I wonder if you have a view about that and whether having the refugees in this school might be an advantage or a disadvantage.

*(Dr Warren)* In the work that we have done we have not got a definite position on whether—

199. No; it is just a view I want.

*(Dr Warren)*—they should be or should not be. In a sense that partly depends on the Home Office and whether they pursue the policy that they have suggested.

200. I know what the Home Office's view is. I am asking for your view as professionals who are deep into all of this.

*(Dr Warren)* The evidence seems to suggest that refugees and asylum seekers in mainstream schools often experience the same kind of situation that we have described in terms of white working class and other minority ethnic students. However, should the system remain as it is the majority are going to

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**[Mr Pollard Cont]**

remain in mainstream schools so therefore the concern for us as educationalists has always got to be to make sure that the mainstream system provides the best service possible for all children who will go through it. In terms of my view of whether there should be a separate system of schooling for refugees and asylum seekers, personally I think not.

201. That would be best for them, the group?

(*Dr Warren*) Yes, but were you to say, "Is the experience within the average school, the average secondary school in particular, one that is always beneficial to those students?", I would say not. The answer to that is not necessarily to set up an alternative schooling system. You may want to consider, as some schools and some local authorities have done, how you support the integration of those students into mainstream schooling. In the London borough of Camden, for instance, one secondary school there operates a class where asylum seekers go in order to have intensive English language preparation and then a planned programme of integration. Along with that planned programme of integration is heavy investment by the school into continued support for those students throughout. That seems to me an eminently sensible approach to take because it is a kind of model that is applicable to all kinds of students. Part of the problem in reflecting on that practice, which you might call good practice, is why is there not similar reflection and consideration as to how all children can be supported appropriately to do well within schools? Too often these are seen as being that we need a specialist programme for these children because they are out of the ordinary. Often they are not out of the ordinary. They have faced particular hurdles. We just have to make sure we do not put even more hurdles in their way once they are here. The evidence strongly suggests that once they have an adequate level of English language competency they do as well as, if not better than, many of their peers. They are highly motivated with investment from home.

202. You did not address the question of whether it disadvantages the host school in particular reference to the George Dixon School which is a school coming out of failure. The host parents might well be worried that another group coming in might not do quite so well. Is there evidence for that and how do you feel about it?

(*Dr Warren*) I just wonder why you should make a distinction between the host school and incoming students.

203. I am asking the question of you.

(*Dr Warren*) I need some clarification on why you make that distinction.

204. If a school is coming out of special measures and is doing well it might be perceived that another group of children with hurdles, as you put it, might well hold that back a little bit and that there might be a perception from the host parents that this group coming in might not be as good for the school as some other kids coming in.

(*Professor Gillborn*) I think historically that is a particular fear that has been used against minority ethnic communities very frequently and continues to be mobilised against asylum seeker communities now. There is evidence that in some schools, as

Simon was saying, once they get English language fluency up to a particular level those students can become the students who take the schools up the league tables. Very often in this area—and you can trace this back to the Swan Report in 1985—there is a dichotomy made between, "Do we do mainstream or separate?", and there tends to be an assumption that, "If we put them in the mainstream we have done it. We have made the decision, we have put them in the mainstream so they are not disadvantaged", and we leave them to it. Then what often happens is that the students are the victims of some of the most vicious racist harassment and the old contact hypothesis, that if you go in and meet these people you would realise they are okay, does not always work. You have to have, as Simon was saying, specialist support. You have to have proper anti-racist measures. Contact between white working class communities and asylum seekers can explode lots of myths if it is handled sensitively and both sides are talked through it, but if you throw asylum seekers in a classroom and leave them alone you are putting them through even more trauma than they have already experienced. It is not a simple one or the other. You have to identify the particular needs and put real resources into meeting them.

Chairman: The George Dixon School this morning was the most open, multi-ethnic school with immigrant children doing wonderfully well.

Mr Pollard: It is a model of good practice.

Chairman: Absolutely; a first-class example of everything I thought a school should be.

**Ms Munn**

205. We have had a very interesting week here in Birmingham because what we have seen is a lot of schools and we have been to ones which are generally improving. In all the headteachers that we have met, admittedly a relatively small number but more than I would have expected, we have seen a culture very much of can do, positive, raising expectations. They are all doing it in different ways but there are some fundamental things about clear leadership, clear standards within schools, clear structures, which are applied, from what we could see, across all students. Some of those schools have been predominantly white, some have been predominantly black. One I think just about reflected the ethnic make-up of the pupil population in Birmingham, but that is less the case; there just seemed to be one school that seemed about that. What you seem to be saying is that in spite of that approach and overall standards going up, what is happening is that the achievements are differential according to race, gender, class, whatever. So what is it that these heads and their teachers and their teams that are in there, because of all the additional staff that are in there, need to be doing differently? I am not disagreeing with you that it is a colour-blind approach in that sense because they have got their systems in place, but it is having those firms systems which seem to be so crucial in setting an atmosphere in which children can learn, so what is it that they need to do differently?

(*Professor Gillborn*) I would shift the balance of the question a little. You said what is it that they need to do differently. I think we have to think about what is

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[Continued

**[Ms Munn Cont]**

it that all of us involved in education need to do differently. One of the things that Simon mentioned right at the beginning was this thing about an implementation gap. There is a real “can do” atmosphere around Birmingham, and Birmingham has really embraced a culture of school effectiveness and achievement, possibly in a way unlike any other LEA in the country, and we have seen some of the benefits of that. Where the race equality targets have not been met seems to be because they have not been the key targets. They have not been the thing that has driven what the schools do and that is because of a confluence of factors from the national level and from the local level and from the individual school level. So the factors that you mentioned about clear leadership, about knowing what is happening in the school are actually some of the key factors that we know are associated with good multi-ethnic schools, schools that raise the achievements of the minority ethnic groups as much, if not more, than other groups. We need clear leadership on equity and clear monitoring on who is in the different groups and, if there are disparities, why, how might we address this and make good the issues we see emerging? How do we tackle racism? Are we serious about tackling it or do we leave it to go on until eventually a kid hits another one, in the way of one of the examples in our paper? We know how at the school level we can be serious about race equality but those things tend not to get the focus that they need because they are not highlighted at the LEA level across all its activities and at the national level. The things that are driving the improvement in overall standards tend, if they mention race equality at all, to mention it as an afterthought. All of the evidence suggests that if we are serious about raising the achievements of particular ethnic minority groups, we need to target those groups. What do we need to do additionally to make sure that they share in the improvements? We need to think what are the likely consequences of these policies which they are going to enact. Every single policy whether at national, local or school level, is likely to have differential impacts on working class kids and minority ethnic groups. We know enough to predict what those impacts might be. Some of them might be conscious, some of them might be unintended, but we know enough to predict what they are. We ought to be in a position to predict those impacts and then go down a route which will help to equalise attainment rather than, as seems to be the case at the moment, pursuing strategies and hoping that they will deliver for everyone, even though a lot of the evidence suggests that some of the strategies we are pinning our hopes on are likely to disadvantage precisely the groups that we are worried about in terms of under-achievement. We know what good practice looks like. We know it needs to take place in a context where everyone is serious about race equality because otherwise the individual teachers or schools which are focusing of racial equality are swimming against a very strong current which is pushing them towards actions which work against race equality rather than for it.

206. Leaving that for a moment because it is getting very complex and beyond my thinking capacity at this time of the afternoon, one of the issues which you raise, which I was very interested in

last time you saw the Committee, was about pupils being entered for exams at which they can only achieve a certain grade and, interestingly enough, when we have been going round schools and talking to students that has been raised in two different schools by different pupils saying that they did not think that was fair. Can you talk us through that a bit. One of the discussions that we had was somebody saying, yes, it is not fair, but also if the alternative is everybody does the same paper and then you have got people who just get so disillusioned with it because they find it too hard work, and if it were more geared up to them they would have a chance of getting a pass, that did not seem too unreasonable. Could you reflect a bit more on that?

(*Professor Gillborn*) I will not recap fully on the tiering system, suffice it to say that in most GCSE examinations pupils do not sit a common paper from which they can get an A\* through to a G. In most GCSEs you are entered for a tiered exam for which there is only a limited number of grades. In mathematics uniquely amongst subjects there are three tiers and if you are entered for the foundation tier, the lowest tier, the very best grade you can get is a D. If you are entered for the foundation tier in other tiered subjects the best you can get is a C. C is the generally accepted minimum you need as a higher grade pass but it is not good enough for entry to the professions or a degree course in that subject. Even for A-level courses, in certain subjects you need higher than a C. Certainly students I have spoken to in research would sooner have the chance of getting the very highest grade rather than somebody else making the decision that they do not even have the possibility of it. In terms of mathematics many students, and particularly parents, simply cannot comprehend why you would have a system whereby the best grade you can get is generally seen as a fail. In terms of the question about progression and the need to have a range of questions, as I understand it, history and music are among the subjects that do not currently have tiered papers. A subject as diverse as history, a subject with such a progression of knowledge like music—if it is within the wit of history and music examiners to design a paper which can adequately identify the difference between a D and an A\*, I have to believe that it is within the wit of examiners in other subjects. It may be difficult and costly but if the alternative is to deny the possibility of a higher grade, given what we know about who that denial happens to—

Chairman: I worry about denying Andrew a question in the last three minutes.

**Mr Turner**

207. You and Dr Warren have used a number of phrases almost interchangeably—“deliver equal opportunities”, “increase equal opportunities”, “equalise attainment”, “focus on race equality”; which are you actually talking about?

(*Professor Gillborn*) I am talking about all of them.

208. I can see how some of these are consistent with raising standards for all, but you say we need to target these groups, that is the under-achievers, those groups that fall below the average performance level

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**[Mr Turner Cont]**

to raise their performance towards the average. If you are targeting those groups, are you doing so at the expense of other groups?

(*Professor Gillborn*) No, you are not taking away from anyone. You are trying to identify where you want to put additional support. That does not have to be taken away from anyone. I do not want to get into a great big complex, philosophical discussion. I think it comes down to a fundamental level. Do we really think there is any inherent reason why on the basis of social class or ethnicity or gender, any group of students is less able to achieve than another one? Is there anything inherent about a pupil, and if there is not then the job of a just education system is to try and help all to achieve what they are capable of. I have not seen any evidence to suggest that there is anything inherent.

209. But targeting does suggest targeting resources and activity on A and rather ignoring B.

(*Professor Gillborn*) It does not mean ignoring B.

210. It does not mean ignoring B, but you complained at the prospect of targeting those who are just below grade C.

(*Professor Gillborn*) If it means that within that model that students who are deemed not capable of meeting the grade are then abandoned—

211. Yes.

(*Professor Gillborn*) So what I am saying is that if you have a system which is trying to deliver a socially just outcome rather than—

212.—rather than high standards?

(*Professor Gillborn*)—rather than simply delivering higher standards for those already advantaged.

213. Those just below grade C are not necessarily advantaged.

(*Professor Gillborn*) They are often advantaged in the sense of receiving additional support inside the school. When you look at who gets into those groups it is usually not the proportion of under-achieving groups you would predict. I am not trying to take away support from anyone. I am trying to say in a context where schools are tailoring consciously different forms of support to different students, one principle of doing that is to try and ensure that at the end of the day, regardless of social background, students have an equal chance of success and failure.

214. You cannot say you are not suggesting that. You are suggesting that if you are suggesting that it is wrong to target those who are just below a grade C—

(*Professor Gillborn*) I am suggesting it is wrong in the wider context of how those decisions are made. There are all kinds of opportunity costs. In everything we do, there are opportunity costs. What I am suggesting is that one alternative approach is to try and ensure so far as possible that students have an equal chance of success or failure at the end of the day. What I am saying is happening currently in many schools is that responding to pressures of league tables, responding to those apparently colour-blind targets, existing inequalities are being re-made within the school system.

215. I accept that that is an example of how resources can inappropriately be targeted, but I am still not clear whether there is any system of targeting resources that is inherently fairer that is not inherently fairer to some groups than to others.

(*Professor Gillborn*) I think it depends on the notion at a basic level of what the goals of the education system are.

216. Indeed.

(*Professor Gillborn*) What do we want from the education system? We do not question, for example, that special education is costly, but we have reached a settlement socially where there is an agreement that certain kids' education will be more costly, and that is not seen as taking away from anyone else, that is seen as an investment by society in those students. Similarly, we should not view race equality as in some way hurting groups who would not be targeted. We should view it as an investment by society in the currently wasted potential of those under-attaining groups.

#### Chairman

217. I think we have to be fair to our witnesses coming on. Much of what you say, David, many members of the Committee will agree with, but one thing we perhaps are a little concerned about is that certain aspects of your conclusions seem to lead to a bit of a blame culture on teachers and the educational process. I will give you an example. When this Committee did a thorough investigation into early years, indeed my own conversations with the Early Excellence Centre here in Birmingham on Monday morning, we found that many children are deeply disadvantaged in the first few months and years, long before they get into education, long before they get into the hands of formal education in schools, and continue to be disadvantaged by the lack of support, encouragement and order in their lives at home. The only concern that some of us have is that it almost ends up as though kids go into education and teachers do not treat them equally, they do not recognise their strengths, they treat them slightly differently, they under-estimate their abilities, where in a sense many people would argue that the early years are the most damaging in terms of a child's development.

(*Professor Gillborn*) I absolutely accept what you say. I think in terms of those particular anecdotes of individuals, we all know cases like that. What I think is important, in terms particularly of looking at race and ethnicity but also in terms of social class, is that there is evidence that the inequalities get worse, so these kids have survived the early years and it is often when they get into secondary school that the inequalities are compounded. First of all, I am not suggesting that it is all to do with what happens inside school. Patently that would be a nonsense. What I am suggesting is that the research suggests that schools are an active contributory factor in this. We know that schools make a difference. That is accepted, everybody accepts that now. Unfortunately, sometimes the difference they make is not a good one. Rather than viewing it as simply blaming teachers, a lot of the more subtle research which has happened recently, the work that goes

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inside schools, tries to understand how it is that this really well-intentioned teacher who is trying to hit the national curriculum targets, trying to keep order, trying to get through the day and wants to help everyone, at the end of the day they have wound up criticising the black students more than anyone else. Why is it that, without realising it, they are sending black students to the deputy much more quickly than a white student who has done the same thing. It is not about blaming; it is about identifying how this happens. Certainly in my experience and Simon's, of not just being a researcher but being a teacher and working with teachers in higher education, the vast majority that I work with view this kind of research as not being negative and blaming but being revelatory. It shows the complexities at work that they do not have the time to see because it is happening through that daily grind. It helps them to understand how it is at the end of the day their school produces a set of exam results which are depressingly similar to the results that they know from past research. Once they see that they start to see ways of breaking that cycle of working differently with different communities and students. When schools find out their own students are saying, "If they treat us with respect, we will treat them with respect", and then when they act on that, they can see some fantastic things happen within their schools.

**Mr Pollard**

218. We saw that this morning.

(Dr Warren) For the category of child that to which you were referring there, those kinds of experiences will obviously affect a certain proportion of children dramatically, but we know that in some cases the interventions always come too late to correct that. As important as a focus on that set of related issues, by particular families or whatever else it is, it does not explain by itself the scale and range of the obstacles to achievement faced by the vast majority of students from minority ethnic communities. While it is an important focus—and I think some of the Government's recent strategies around children in care for instance are really important, and hopefully they will prove beneficial—it does not explain the range and scale of obstacles faced by many students, so it is not a total explanation of what is happening and, therefore, I think what David said is right, that we have got to also focus on normal school-based practices that seem to produce detrimental effects consistently.

Chairman: We have an open mind and we will continue to take evidence. Dr Warren, Professor Gillborn, it has been a pleasure to hear what you have had to say. Thank you very much.

**Examination of Witnesses**

MR JOHN TOWERS, CBE, F.ENG, Chairman, and MR DAVID CRAGG, Executive Director, Learning and Skills Council for Birmingham and Solihull, and MR STEPHEN ELLISON, Ellison Webb, and MR MARK LINTON, WorldCom, were examined.

**Chairman**

219. Can I welcome you for this last session today of our inquiry into education in Birmingham. It is a delight for me to welcome John Towers, the Chairman of the Learning and Skills Council, David Cragg, the Chief Executive, Mark Linton and Stephen Ellison. Can I apologise that the story in the *Evening Mail* rather got out of hand. When we did our original press release conference on Monday, they said, "What are you doing here?" We explained that this is the beginning of week-long intensive look at education and skills in one city. It is very unusual for a select committee to do this and to spend that amount of time. It takes a lot of commitment to get nine Members of Parliament to do that. They said, "Are there any people you would like to meet?" and we said we would like to see employers because we have had a disappointing response from the people we originally approached. We have got a very good mixture, including John Towers whom I know from my Chairmanship of the Manufacturing Group in Parliament. Welcome all of you. The background is this: this Select Committee only inquires into things which we think can add value. We have been away from secondary education for a long time. We have done a lot of stuff in higher education in the last couple of years. We have done early years and we have done the individual learning accounts inquiry quite recently but many people could criticise us by saying we have been away from mainstream

education for some time. As I have said constantly, the Government tanks are on the lawns of the secondary schools. Secondary schools will be our whole year's focus in the coming year, looking at admissions, looking at diversity, all the different kind of schools—specialist schools, foundation schools, CTCs—and whether that will drive up standards and whether it is essentially good use of taxpayers' money to produce the people this country needs in educational terms. We are also looking at difficult to teach pupils, the under-achievers, and also looking at recruitment and retention of staff, so quite an agenda. Here in Birmingham we are looking at everything. We have dipped into primary schools, we have looked at a faith school, we have looked at a lot of comprehensive schools, we have looked at exclusion, at PRUs, we have been with the three universities. We are an Education and Skills Committee too so questions we are pointing to the four of you will be looking at skills, particularly—and I have warned John and the others before they came in—about the match and mismatch between what this city's and this region's needs in terms of skills against what we are actually producing. Let's get started. Can I invite Birmingham Learning and Skills Council to say a few words to open our session.

(Mr Towers) I guess you know the history of how we moved over the past two years from the TECs organisations and so on to where we are now. We are actually pretty chuffed at the way it has gone in

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MR STEPHEN ELLISON AND MR MARK LINTON*[Continued]*

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**[Chairman Cont]**

Birmingham. I know it has been the source of quite a lot of change/fall-out in many parts of the country, but I would say really—and unfortunately I have to say this despite the fact he is here—because of David's planning and foresight in terms of how the changes were going to come about before they were announced, we prepared very hard as far as we could to actually begin to change before the formal changes were announced, as a result of which we are pretty well-known as the part of the country where the changes have occurred most smoothly. This is not an LSC saying that we went through two years of hell with massive staffing and teething problems and things like this. This is an LSC saying this is a bit of a challenge. Many of us had two jobs rather than one job for the period of time of the transition but, by and large, it has gone very well. We are also in a LSC, however, which recognises that we have absolutely massive challenges in this particular location. If you look at the way that the history of the region or our sub-region has moved, then it has moved from a largely manufacturing-type industrial-type of sub-region to one which is now virtually completely balanced amongst the various sectors that you would typify but which over the next 10 years is going to move even more rapidly away from a manufacturing base into a service sector and finance sector-type base. To give you an idea of how that reflects in skill terms, it is a shift of somewhere in the region of 20,000-odd jobs compared to the skills base, so if you take the combination of what is the shift in jobs and what is the demographic nature of our skills base, it becomes an even bigger challenge. You would really have to have something in the region of a lower 30,000-type shift in the skills structure of the sub-region. So we are happy so far that we have provided an organisation and a set of relationships and I think a pretty good partnership spirit amongst the partners and ourselves in the sub-region but very, very aware of the massive job we have got to do now and over the next few years.

220. Thank you for that. David?

(*Mr Cragg*) Just to put a little bit more flesh on the bones. What we have now got in a sense for the first time in a generation is a belief that we have the potential over the remainder of the decade to achieve full employment for all those who are currently registered unemployed. That is a radical shift for us and potentially the basis for motivation and aspiration in ways that we have not seen before. But we have got an enormous polarisation in that skills base. Ten years ago you would have found a very different pattern, but now if you look at the degree and professional qualification level (what we in the jargon call level four) we are above the national average in the sub-region whereas 10 years ago we would have been quite significantly below the national average. Yet at the other end of the spectrum you have 38 per cent estimated from a very reliable base of people with less than a level 2 qualification, less than five GCSEs, less than an NVQ2 or its equivalent. You will know from your wider work that the correlation between low skills, and in particular a lack of basic skills, is a very strong one. If you overlay all of that the demographics, if you put it very simply, the fastest growing groups within the working age population, in particular

ethnic minorities and older workers, are the least qualified and least skilled. The group which is declining the most rapidly is the one that has been traditionally in greatest demand, 25 to 45-year-olds, in particular the white population. I was interested in the earlier debate because we have placed demographic changes as absolutely one of the central issues for this city in particular but for this sub-region as a whole. If you want some stark figures, then we would estimate that by 2010 they will be 60,000 fewer white working age people, there will be 50,000 more people of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage (who are several times more likely to be unemployed and are the least skilled group in terms of formal qualifications) and, similarly, there will be another 12,000 working age people from an African Caribbean heritage. If you overlay on that age, there will be 40,000 more people over the age of 45. So you will have a demographic mix that will have to be tackled. My main conclusion around skills, for what it is worth, is that we have to get off a hook which is age related in terms of our policies and our investments. You were talking, Chairman, before the formal session about manufacturing. We desperately need, for example, mature apprenticeships in manufacturing. We will not address manufacturing skills shortages on the vain assumption that we will attract enough young people; we will not. We have to have a major up-skilling programme, both to raise the skills of people already in the workplace, but also to bring back older workers who have got manufacturing skills into manufacturing who need a mature apprenticeship. If you were looking at one individual piece of work, we were delighted that we were chosen as one of the six national pilots for the Employer Training Pilot because we think there is a crying need locally, that is the entitlement to an NVQ2 for people without a qualification in work. We have, as you will know, importantly for small employers, which is the vast proportion of employers, wage replacement cost. We are at the early stages of that. It is very interesting to observe the employer response, which is wholly enthusiastic and very, very positive. Our formal market research tells us very loudly indeed that employers, rightly or wrongly, are particularly welcoming and support the release of their staff to be formally trained to those qualifications, so a flavour perhaps.

221. I was going to open up the questioning to John and David and then I am going to ask Martin and Stephen to say a few words and then we get a little questioning of you and then we can bring you together. When we meet Bryan Sanderson, because the LSC nationally is a responsibility of my Committee—it is the largest quango, in fact it spends an enormous amount of money—we tease Bryan and we call him the biggest quango holder, and of course our job is to ensure that any expenditure under the education and skills' budget is wisely spent because it is taxpayers' money. What surprised us when talking to the regional Government Office was that they seemed to have very little relationship. When we pushed them in terms of who they had relationships with and whether there was an active partnership, the one blank we drew was with yourselves. It seems a

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[Continued

**[Chairman Cont]**

puzzlement to us that the Regional Government Office for the West Midlands would say they had very little contact with you.

(*Mr Towers*) Do they not know they have got a council member on our board?

222. I don't think they mentioned that.

(*Mr Towers*) He was there this morning. I observed him from 8 o'clock until ten, so this is true!

223. Why do you think they said that they did not feel they had much of a relationship?

(*Mr Towers*) I have not got a clue; you had better ask them.

(*Mr Cragg*) Chairman, that is not correct. We are co-terminous as a regional grouping with that region. I think there is a slight confusion here. If yours is a literal question about their relationship with us in terms of the accountabilities, they have no responsibility for the Learning and Skills Council. If I look at it from a purely personal perspective, I represent the Learning and Skills Council on the Regional Programming and Monitoring Committee. I have worked very closely with the Director of the Government Office on all matters to do with European strategy for the region.. I would say the interfaces on things which are pertinent to the government are very close. Day-to-day, the Government Office is not a large operation, it does not have direct—

224.—it has 400 staff.

(*Mr Cragg*)—It does not have a direct responsibility for us, and I think that is probably what they are referring to.

(*Mr Towers*) I think that must be the case as well. Sorry to jest slightly about it. First of all, there is a formal structure anyway and, as far as I know, all local LSCs have a Local Government Office member on their board, as we have. In addition to that, I agree because of our history of being the TECs and the relationship with the Government Office—and certainly David and I have a very close relationship with them in areas such as the Accelerate Programme, in areas such as the work we are doing on the car industry front in the region—there is a very heavy Government Office presence with us. Do they run us? No. If they interpret that question how do they manage the LSC, they do not because they are not supposed to, but they do work very closely with us.

225. We will clear that out the way.

(*Mr Towers*) Alright.

Chairman: Can we move on more generally. Jeff, you are bursting to ask a question.

**Jeff Ennis**

226. If I talk to any FE principal in my part of the world, South Yorkshire, and I guess it would be true to say if you talk to any FE college principal in the West Midlands, they would say FE for far too long has been the "Cinderella" part of the Education Service. As you know, we currently have a disparity in funding between sixth forms and LEA colleges. How do you see this developing and the gap closing in funding terms?

(*Mr Cragg*) First of all, of course, the overall settlement and terms of the settlement are things which are matters for national negotiation, not least which are significantly determined by the Department for Education and Skills. To take a specific example, the real terms guarantee to schools in terms of the change in the funding arrangements was something that was predetermined by Ministers. The LSC nationally sets out its stall to have a single unified post-16 funding regime from 2005. On that basis I think there is a lot of further work to be done. We have got to see how the new schools funding regime does bed down, but it is ultimately a matter for the settlement between the Government and the LSC at a national level. If you ask me to give a personal view, because I think you are asking me for a personal view, I think it would be enormously helpful to have a consistent and fair funding regime. One of my greatest fears, and I think it would be a fear that is shared by most managers in institutions, is that we have seen a very damaging casualisation of the FE workforce through excessive efficiency gains during the 1990s. We have begun to restore some of that. In this financial year and the previous year (the previous academic year) we have stabilised and given a rate of increase which was fairly close to cost of living. This year we have been able, through decisions taken by our National Council, to start to close that gap, but there is still an issue to be addressed and I do not think any of us would want to shirk that issue.

(*Mr Towers*) I think you would get the same sort of commentary in this sub-region in terms of comparison of those issues. I also think—and I do not think this is rose-coloured specs—that compared to three or four years ago you now have more of a heads-up attitude among most of the FE establishment than perhaps existed then.

227. I know you will not determine the answer to this question, but do you think we will see a levelling up in terms of resource between the two or a levelling down?

(*Mr Cragg*) Frankly, because the Government took a very clear policy decision around the real terms guarantee, the only way it might work would be through a levelling up, if there is to be levelling. I personally would welcome that. The one thing we have got to be careful about is that funding for schools in sixth forms does not become politicised over the next 12 months. We have made it our business, apart from working very, very closely collectively with school heads and college principals in a collective process, to conduct an extremely successful 16 to 19 review and an extremely favourable area-wide inspection, which is complimentary about all the work done in that territory, but in schools on their own we have established very good liaison arrangements, working very closely working with our colleagues in the LEA. When it comes to funding, we have not taken our eye off the ball. I am literally in the process at the moment of setting up a whole series of seminars this autumn to make sure headteachers get an opportunity for feedback on what their experience is of the first phase, the real implementation phase, and we want to make sure we feed back nationally what the policy implications are of the real experience on the ground as we roll through the year.

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[Continued

**[Jeff Ennis Cont]**

228. How is the relationship between the 47 LSCs locally and the national LSC? How is that panning out? Is it exactly the same relationship between the former TECs and the national body of TECs or how does it differ in any way?

(*Mr Cragg*) You could not draw that comparison because the TEC National Council was a trade association, it was a representative body, it was the voice of the 72. This is a complex model, you understand that from the discussions you have had in your Committee before, and it was bound to take time to bed down. I think the way we are integrating our management structures and decision-making processes is now extremely encouraging and very, very positive. I, for example, sit on the National Operations Board with national colleagues where national directors are sitting with executive directors from the 47 LSCs drawn from the regions, so we have got a regional perspective which is starting to tackle decisions collectively which is really beginning to act as we wish it to act—as a unitary body. We have made huge progress in that direction. We have programme boards covering all the major areas of work. You have to balance, of course, the commitment of time that means and avoid creating bureaucracy and waste in the process, but I think we are getting that about right. Certainly in terms of devolution I believe we have got significant flexibilities in the way we operate now. There was a lot of debate around that in the early stages. If we look at discretionary funding, as you might describe it from your Committee's perspective, in excess of ten per cent of my total budget (and I have well over £2.5 million) is being targeted mainly on skills and workforce issues or on issues of disadvantage or inequality, which I think is about right.

(*Mr Towers*) You have to think hard and long about the challenge that Brian and John have had. They have had a challenge of taking a very centralised, very monolithic organisation and turning it into an organisation that is supposed to be a supporting process for regionally-made decisions. That is very easy to explain, that is very easy to define. It is probably a little less easy when you have got 500 people who were previously part of that central, decision-making, monolithic organisation. And we have seen progress.

#### Jonathan Shaw

229. I want to discuss with you some issues that were raised from one of our visits this morning. As you know, we have been visiting a number of educational establishments, one of them is the Women's Academy, which you may be familiar with—

(*Mr Cragg*) Very familiar.

230. It was very clear to us that they were in a very poor area of Birmingham and offering women the opportunity to return to education. We met a woman who left school at 13 who had now completed A-levels and was now working, and there were many other success stories throughout the Academy. Given the point that you made about the demographics, this is a type of institution that they are keen to replicate elsewhere in the city, but they did—

complain is not the right word—say there were difficulties with the LSC and your predecessor in terms of funding capital.

(*Mr Cragg*) That is a very surprising remark. First of all, let's say where we started from. Slightly unusually (because we were well prepared) instead of just walking about the world in the first six months of our existence saying, "We are the LSC, we have these powers, we are very important", we had a development plan and we focused on what we thought the critical goals were for the next decade, and among those goals and key issues was improving the infrastructure of colleges and further education generally. In doing that, we set out our stall to really tackle a legacy of fairly dreadful buildings and under-investment, and in the last 12 months, I suspect of all local LSCs throughout the country, we have probably secured more capital investment than any other. We have got a commitment to approval for two completely new colleges which are much needed, one very much right at the heart of the inner city. In the case of the Women's Academy, which is part of City College, we are supporting a whole range of capital projects in terms of outreach with a different focus but similar concept to what they are doing with the Women's Academy. We have the South Birmingham College and we have assisted them with £7 million worth of investment in a £16 million project which will be right at the centre of the Eastside development of the city. I could go on.

231. That is the response I wish to hear but obviously where organisations raise these issues with us—

(*Mr Cragg*) I am pleased to have the opportunity.

232.—It is part of our job.

(*Mr Cragg*) Can I say another thing, if I can be a little bit bolder—

233. Now you are on a roll!

(*Mr Cragg*) We are engaged very, very closely in the whole development of the Learning Quarter for the big East Side Regeneration Programme. I believe we will get not only significant LSC investment but focused investment by the Regional Development Agency into a whole range of further and higher education facilities which will be an integral part of this new Learning Quarter. That is a very exciting development, especially for FE colleges.

234. It is quite a unique institute. You could say it is another specialism. It is particularly for women and 83 per cent of the women are from ethnic minorities. We are seeing specialist schools grow around the city of Birmingham and the Committee has visited a number of them. When we ask the question to staff, teachers and pupils, "What does it mean for the school?" they talk about of course the additional investment, the additional money that they get from that, but also the status within the communities which provides a very positive focus for the school. I wonder how you see specialist schools fitting into your plans of providing the skills or closing that skills deficit that you have talked about. What is the relationship with specialist schools, the skills deficit, and your plans and the LEA?

(*Mr Towers*) I think once again David achieved a massive conjuring trick because one of the first things we set about with the colleges was to get them to

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actually run their own working programmes to identify where those specialist learning activities should best take place. Obviously we provided demographic data and we provided help and so on in that process, but out of that process came what is a really quite clearly defined programme in terms of how just that subject should be approached here in Birmingham and Solihull. I guess it was one of the biggest sources of tension because this has been a widely discussed topic and I guess it was a source of tension when the LSC process was first developed but, yes, it is there, and it is now moving forward.

(*Mr Cragg*) To be specific around that, at a very early stage, instead of looking for competitive bids for centres of vocational excellence, we put in place a planning process collectively with all the colleges. We agreed at the first stage the obvious choices for educational specialism so, for example, the College of Food, which is literally round the corner and which is a National Centre of Excellence for hotel and catering, became the lead vocational college for hotel and catering. It is self-evident and a given. But in lots of other areas you have got a legacy of the lowest common denominator, a loss of a lot of level 3 provision, a loss of critical intermediate skills provision, no clear lead vocational institution, so we put in place collective and joint reviews with all the colleges, and for that matter other work based learning providers, to look at the balance of provision, and alongside that we did a comprehensive assets review, which has now been adopted as a national model, looking at the whole of the FE estate across the piece. Out of the very first pilot exercises, which was a construction exercise, we had unanimous agreement on some tough new recommendations about rationalisation and an agreement that four colleges would come together in a single collaborative venture. We are in the middle of a feasibility study for new investment, for a single shared site to increase both the scale, the breadth and the level, especially in terms of skills in vocational provision, for construction. That was agreed with the colleges with total support. We have similarly been through an engineering review. The one point I would make is when you talk about specialist schools, I think there is a real policy issue about how you align specialist schools with vocational centres of excellence in colleges. We are moving very productively into a very much more integrated 14-19 phase and the more you do so the more important it is that you tackle that policy issue because at the moment it looks as if the left hand is not communicating with the right hand. You have one set of arrangements for specialist schools and a completely different set of arrangements (which we would say are very well developed) for vocational specialisation in colleges. I should say that the whole approach to vocational specialisation was rooted in the principle that we wanted a federal FE system and that there should be progression from colleges which are providing entry level/first level to the centres of vocational excellence and in turn the centre of vocational excellence should have a developmental role for the whole of that.

235. Have you had discussions with the LEA about that? We do know that whilst the schools within the LEA are performing well in terms of where they have come from, they are still not seeing huge numbers of youngsters staying on post 16.

(*Mr Cragg*) I would not quite say that. I think we might have a debate about that.

**Chairman**

236. Certainly substantially below the national average.

(*Mr Cragg*) We are not substantially below the national average. We are at around 73 per cent compared to 75 per cent. I think we might have a statistical debate.

**Jonathan Shaw**

237. I do not want that.

(*Mr Cragg*) To answer your question, the relationship with the LEA could not be better. We have worked hand in glove to look at the whole 16 to 19 group with both LEAs across our patch. I cannot remember the two LEAs, Birmingham and Solihull, ever working so closely together. OFSTED recognised that in its area-wide review.

**Chairman**

238. Who should draw all this together? All of us are on "Planet Birmingham", none of us is from Birmingham, and we are trying to get under the skin of where the challenges are and what we can see to identify those challenges. Perhaps I can bring our two other witnesses for this afternoon in now. It seems there is a proliferation—and you just described them, David—of players in this. As you say, the Government Office has a hand in this, the Regional Development Agency has a hand in this, the local education authority has, you do. Looking at the local employers I wonder sometimes if they might glaze over with all the acronyms and all the players and they might say, "All we want is well qualified, skilled people that we can employ." How do you view the work of the LSCs and all these myriad group of people who are supposed to be delivering for you high quality employees?

(*Mr Linton*) One of the things I have noticed in this and throughout the day from the previous meeting is we talk about nurture, coaching and parental interest over the child. I was a by-product of that. I left school early, joined the Army, did not have any qualifications; now I have a degree and I work for a global communications company. One of the things that helped me whilst at university was something like the LSC, the Student Industrial Society, and getting involved and learning about skills. David talked earlier on about there being a massive skills gap, not so much in what you have got in 25-plus age but really the 40 age. That involves re-educating the parents of these children who we are trying to get up to a standard and getting modern apprenticeships where people are willing to go back to work or willing to look at skills and developing them, not so much on an academic level where you will get a certificate at the end of it but you will not really get a job at the end of it. That is what I would say an employer looks for—somebody who can really use some tangible skills, pull into the work place, and get a product and results from these individuals. One of those areas is team work, knowing how to operate with each other

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socially as well as working with your partners at the end of the day. If you look at certain individuals in this country and what schools are trying to do, the schools are trying to reach what the Government is putting down as a national curriculum and saying we need you to reach these standards, and really forgetting the extra curricular stuff that they should be getting involved in, like the team work and the leadership and looking at what employers are looking for. Maybe we ought to ask employers like ourselves to go into schools—and I have done that in the past—take a day out, very much an industry day, and say, “What do you understand as a young student looking to leave school about the employers? What are you looking for?” If we have got 16 to 19 year olds not continuing with their education like I did and going back at 24, what happens in between those years and what are they doing?

239. That is a very good point. I would like to come back to that Stephen, how do you see this?

(*Mr Ellison*) I have got quite a bit to say, being both on employer and involved in commercial training. I understand 99 per cent of the acronyms that have been bandied about, so it is perhaps a little easier for me. I have made several notes and agree very much with what David and John have said about the tremendous efforts that have been made in Birmingham, but probably could come up with one or two negatives from my point of view where Birmingham has gone the 90 per cent but then has failed the last ten per cent to make it work. Taking a point Mark just made, one thing we may well be in danger of is encouraging our 16 to 19-year-olds to stay on at school and do higher qualifications and then having a very similar situation they are in in France where they have nobody who wants to take up a manual job. The suicide rate amongst teenagers in France is horrendous, much, much worse than it is here. Yes, the pursuit of academia is an ideal that we should be going for but it does not necessarily suit everybody.

240. Can I push you on that. There is in the current debate, as there always is on this is when they have got nothing else to put on the *Today* programme, the old argument about “not more means worse”. We have around 34 per cent of people going into higher education in this country and the Prime Minister’s ambition is to get it to 50 per cent. But we still have at the moment 66 per cent of the population not going into higher education, which is an awful lot of people. As we have been round schools in Birmingham this week it is interesting how many teachers and heads have said to us, “We work very hard with these young students. We get them to qualifications at 16. A substantial number of them disappear at 16 and do not reappear”, particularly one school that I will not name but which is doing a really good job. “What frightens us at 16 is that they have a piece of paper, they go home, they close the door, they turn the television on and do not come out. They do not come out to go to college or to go to a job or to go into other education.” And they said, “It is not our job to track where they have gone.” I said to them and a number of us said to them, “We will be seeing the Learning and Skills Council . . .”

(*Mr Cragg*) It is our job and we are quite happy with that job.

241. Coming back to the Learning and Skills Councils, Stephen brought this point up, and it is a phenomenal problem, that a number of your good schools are producing 16-year-olds and they are lost, they are not tracked. Should you be tracking them, John?

(*Mr Towers*) Could I go back to your original question, which was not answered, because I am also an employer, as you know. MG Rover is a big employer and therefore when it comes to issues of skills and training, mature apprenticeships and modern apprenticeships, it has more at its disposal than the small and medium-sized businesses that we at the LSC try very hard to get to the same level. I would say very definitely in the past that a combination of an already complicated set of processes and a desire on the part of politicians to have an initiative a week had caused many small and medium-sized business people to say, “It is just too much. I am chief accountant, storekeeper and head mechanic. I cannot be director of training as well in this terribly complicated environment.” What we are trying to do at the moment is two things. First of all, we are trying to simplify the ability to be knowledgeable as a small business person about what is available and at the same time provide both financial assistance and administrative assistance into making those things happen. It is bound to have a two in the middle of it, but we have just launched a scheme which is a pilot in the area.

(*Mr Cragg*) It is what I talked about earlier. “Train to Gain” is our local brand name.

(*Mr Towers*) You know the PR people who do these things!

(*Mr Cragg*) We are working already with well over 500 individual employers and most of those are SMEs. A lot of them, for example, are private care homes, and there are big issues about the national care standards at the moment. A lot of the people in the Asian business community run textile operations which is very clearly segmented work. I would want to challenge that a little bit, Chairman. That does sound like an old story about multiplicity. If anything, people are moaning to us that we are perhaps too all powerful because we are managing the whole of those resources. In this region, for example, we have reached an agreement with the local development agency that the six local LSCs will co-ordinate the Regional Skills Strategy through lead LSC arrangements and at a sub-regional level as well on behalf of the RDA. That is a comprehensive agreement. The RDA has even funded specialist regional skills roles for us to co-ordinate that work from now to the period 2006. I think that is very helpful.

242. Track us through the 16-year-olds who disappear and no one tracks them. What is the relationship between you and Connexions, to bring another organisation?

(*Mr Cragg*) It is a very close and day-to-day working relationship. I was surprised at your statement. I think you were suggesting very low participation rates. We are lower than the national average, there is no question about that, but relative to our neighbours in the Black Country our participation rates are quite high. 16 to 18s are around 73 per cent. It is too low and the national

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target of 80 per cent is a perfectly legitimate challenge for us as a LSC locally as well as nationally. Most worryingly, there are around 15 per cent of young people who are in no form of structured education and training and most of them are not even in employment. So those are big issues for us naturally. The joint work—and remember we are 18 months old—in putting those systems in place has made massive progress. We are much better informed and much clearer about that. If you come back to schools, the arrangements we put in place and the action plan which Ministers have signed off following the area-wide inspection by OFSTED—and this has been agreed through the whole of the schools network of heads as well as the college principals—is to look for a much more focused neighbourhood-based patch-based approach to planning, and in particular to look at picking up the issue of non-participation as one of our highest priorities and to see much better targeting and focusing of collective efforts on a patch basis between all the schools and the relevant local colleges across the 14 to 19 group.

243. Is that not one of the problems? One of the things you notice as a “comer in”, as we say in Yorkshire, is that people even to go to school travel great distances.

(Mr Cragg) It is absolutely a problem.

244. When you talk to people about where they are going to go to college at 16 or to get skills at 16, the places where they are going to get those skills and go to college, for very many people in the population, are a long hike.

(Mr Cragg) We agree completely. It is not so much that the places are a long hike, it is just that people have not got sufficient trust and faith in what is available at a local level. If I give you the extreme examples: Sutton Coldfield College in the north of the city recruits from 170 individual schools and Cadbury College in the south of the city, which is a much smaller sixth form college, also recruits from 48 schools. The whole basis of our work 14 to 19 is to get a much better and consistent progression of pre- and post-16, through collaborative local arrangements between a college and a school on a patch, building, incidentally, on what the LEA has done in *Excellence in Cities* which we think has been very successful.

245. We saw a very good scheme backed by local employers out at Four Dwellings School of which you know?

(Mr Towers) Yes I do.

246. Which seemed very good.

(Mr Towers) Yes, we are much taken with that ourselves.

**Valerie Davey**

247. A group of us went to Turves Green Girls' School, and woe betide any college that took on some of the girls there with their engineering and computing skills, not recognising the ability which they have now been given. Thank you, Rover, for the work put in there. I want to take up perhaps on the back of that where girls are falling back. I want to come back to the Women's Academy because that is where we went on to. I appreciate enormously what

you said in a very robust way, David, about all that the LSC has done, but given the demographics, given that it is this large Pakistani community which is represented at college and which is the drop out, and where the women are potentially the workforce, “small is beautiful” may be something that you do need to replicate. Despite all you have done—and I do not blame you at all in brushing it aside and saying this is what we have done and this is where we are going—

(Mr Cragg) I was not saying that.

(Mr Towers) I do not think he was saying that.

Valerie Davey: I apologise if that is not what you were saying.

Chairman: Never apologise.

**Valerie Davey**

248. I do apologise because I think you are doing some good work and I certainly do not want to get on the wrong side of that. I was very sceptical, to be quite honest, about what this small academy might be doing, but having seen the trust—again it is that building of trust—amongst a community which has not had the benefit very much at school level and now certainly is not going to be encouraged by their families, sadly, to go into co-ed colleges, this has opened a door. Some of those stories we heard, we could go on, it was not just the ones that you heard here, there were others, and it seemed to us that the potential for that was way above the small unit that it was, and being able to replicate it may help. Given your analysis at the beginning that the ethnic minority community—not at school age but the next generation, the parents—are those you want to tap into, then for value for money that small academy was way above anything I have seen.

(Mr Cragg) It is worth responding to say I was asked simply about capital investment so I gave a proper robust response. I would not want to convey a message through that that the thing we are interested in is solely that kind of investment; it is the very reverse. Again, it is taking time. We have to go at the right speed. We cannot just rush at institutions and bounce them into it. It is “yet another initiative syndrome” if you are not careful. One of the things we have done is to look both at 14 to 19s, as I have mentioned already, at area planning, which then starts to look at individual disadvantaged groups and targeting. We now are looking at the same co-ordinated process for looking to get all first level and access work at a local area and bringing together for the first time the adult education service with FE colleges and with other voluntary sector providers. We have got a major review taking place which is engaging all those groups, and one of our big objectives is to get a much closer alignment between what is going on at a patch basis, in individual disadvantaged groups especially, and wider regeneration and employment initiatives. That is crucial. We have got the best possible inter-agency co-ordination of employment that we have seen in the last 20 years. For example, we are all working right across the piece from the voluntary sector, at this end of the supply chain, if you like, right through to Business Link at the interface with businesses, the JobCentre Plus and the local authorities on the

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Bullring making absolutely sure that the 8,000 jobs created in the Bullring are closely linked to neighbourhood renewal and regeneration and outreach work. That is precisely the kind of issues you are picking up that we are replicating on the ground.

249. Could I ask Mark or Stephen whether that makes sense to you? As employers can you echo that?

(*Mr Ellison*) I can give a very good case study in point about that. About 12 or 18 months ago I was approached by Pertemps who have a large contract to get people back into work. We are a training company and we have two or three Asian tutors on board. Sadly, I cannot afford to employ them full time, but I do have those and I could call upon a number more. There is a large, large number of Asian people who are not working in the East Birmingham area. This is well-known, I am sure, by John and by David. I approached several employers to say that if we came across basically trained people who are trained in hygiene and health and safety, would they be prepared to give people a job and give people a chance. Initially the response was very, very good, but the enthusiasm waned because it is fine, it is great, we train people, people have the knowledge, have the skills, but the cultural gap is not assessed by the training. This is in no way intended to be any judgment on any particular culture, but the employers found it too difficult to make provisions for people who may be shy in speaking to a member of the opposite sex, who may be shy in coming forward, who may have different cultural views on certain things. I was speaking to employers like Allied Bakeries and various other employers in the food sector because primarily that is where we work, and there is a lot of employment in the food and food manufacture sector from this particular background. I put about two and a half months into it and it fell flat on its face because it was not going to work. As I mentioned before, an awful lot of work is done to take somebody the 90 per cent (and a woman's A-levels and qualifications are superb) but they need another 10 per cent to make them "work ready", if I could use that expression.

(*Mr Towers*) More than 10 per cent.

(*Mr Ellison*) I was being conservative.

**Chairman**

250. Why do you say more than 10 per cent, John?

(*Mr Towers*) You have heard the LSC's perspective on this. We support that process and we would like to see much, much more because we know that it will have a multiplier effect and eventually we will be able to get to where we want to. However, if you talk to an average employer round here he will take a very practical approach to this and say, "All very well, but unless the education, training and skilling turns itself into employability in a normal context—I am very happy to listen to you and hear what was said, only I do not know what I have got to do with it." In other words, "I haven't got a women only factory." I think that is what Stephen was referring to.

(*Mr Ellison*) Another employer was blunt to me not too long ago. He said, "If they cannot speak English, I do not want them." I said, "Many people

can speak English and will be able to get by, you are judging too quickly," and he said, "No, if they cannot read the instructions, I am not interested."

251. Surely a lot of people you are talking about will have good language skills?

(*Mr Ellison*) This is my opinion. I think there is a huge, huge under-estimate in the literacy ability of not just the 30 plus per cent of people from other cultures in Birmingham but also the white European people in Birmingham. Because of things that have been mentioned before about people's parents being made redundant, difficulties with education in the past, and speaking from practical experience—

**Mr Turner**

252. You said there has been an under-estimate—  
(*Mr Ellison*) Of the number of people who are below level one in writing, again my opinion.

**Chairman**

253. We hear what you say about that and what John says about that, but one of the things you find—and a couple of you popped into the last session we had with the two academics and the reason we invited them is they have done a study of Birmingham on the progress of African-Caribbean people here—is if you put all that to one side, part of that discussion was when we have been to schools one of the most difficult groups to bring out their potential and get into employment is white working class lads, and to some extent lasses, who have got no problems with linguistic skills or working in a mixed environment, but in this city it seems you have got a very high level of unemployment of just that type of person.

(*Mr Towers*) Some of the best attainment is among Indian girls, they top the tree.

254. Absolutely, so if we concentrate on that for a moment in LSCs and talk about bread and butter issues, here it is flagged up time and time again that there is this real problem with young men living on estates in Birmingham, perhaps their fathers or grandfathers worked in the car industry at one stage, but they not see a role for themselves and are not skilled enough and do not have this 10 per cent or 15 per cent. Sitting here listening to you as employers and LSC active leaders, what are we doing in a city like this? You say it is difficult with Asian women. I can understand that. What about this population when you are dying to get skilled young men?

(*Mr Cragg*) Let's focus on young men.

255. White young men.

(*Mr Cragg*) I think young men.

256. It is a difference in language.

(*Mr Cragg*) You had a debate earlier. There is a big debate to be had about race and class because the correlation is pretty clear for me.

257. Why is it clear? In what sense clear?

(*Mr Cragg*) If you stop mapping the city ethnically and map the city in terms of multiple disadvantage, you will find the correlation is overwhelmingly the same correlation. It just happens to be particular ethnic groups. For example, we have done a lot of cross-referencing of unemployment in health and

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educational attainment and you can see how that lines up. The more complex the ethnicity becomes, the more you have got to focus down. You are asking me what we are doing. We are clear that by the time you have got to 16, if you look at the horrendous results now of African-Caribbean boys or, for that matter, for pockets of working class white boys, we need to focus in on those particular areas in a way that makes sense in a remedial context because you are trying to get people back in and trying to address a whole range of things. This year we have introduced an incentive for institutions to work outside the box because we believe it is necessary—and we come back to the funding which Mr Ennis mentioned earlier—and we do not think formula funding will address this issue. It requires far more to get people off the streets, in through the door and support them to stay there. If there is no additional support you will not do that. We have introduced an easy to manage benchmark. We look at the current baseline of participation in each of the colleges and among work based learning providers (not in sixth forms because you have got to have a qualification to enter sixth forms) and we are offering a 25 per cent uplift for increased recruitment for institutions, on a clear condition that they will work with other intermediaries, in particular, for example, we have forged an agreement across the whole of the area with “Foyers” to work with those Foyers to target the hardest to help and to create a bridge between the intermediary who is working right at the grass-roots of the community and the institutions or training providers. We are doing the same, for example, with black intermediary organisations. We are working in Handsworth with an organisation well-known nationally called the Scarman Trust which is doing a lot of work with other grass roots training organisations. There has been a 25 per cent uplift in funding which we think is very legitimate and we have used TEC legacy funding to do that, and we have had £1 million this year to do two things—to do practical things to forge relations with those organisations that are in touch with young people, but also to give institutions a really new model of working out in the community outside the institutional boxes. We also hope we will be able to evaluate what is, after all, a pilot exercise from our own point of view, and show how in both a controlled but very flexible way you can bring precisely those young people back into education and training.

(*Mr Towers*) I sat at the back for some of the discussion you were having with David and Simon and part of that discussion talked about a racist attitude. It was a sophisticated definition of a racist attitude in schools which I was, frankly, struggling with. We have talked at length about the stuff that David has spoken to you about. If you take the community that we are talking about, take that particular class level, then the issue that we face, the issue that we know about, the issue that is most easy to understand is the role model issue. The fact that it is smart not to work, it is smart not to study, rather than the other way round. What this process is attempting to do is not to say you are bad parents or you are bad teachers but it is trying to get a role model type of thinking into the process which says it might be quite smart to make a few quid when you

are older, it might be quite smart to drive around in a nice car because you are making a few quid, and you do not make a few quid and run the risk of going to prison every so often. We are not there and I do not think our philosophy is yet fully developed but, goodness me, I honestly believe—and I do not have the statistics—that schools these days are one of the least racist areas and one of the least things we need to worry about in terms of a distinction of that nature.

Chairman: I think this Committee would agree with you. Could I give Andrew a turn. He is going to get restless if I do not give him a question now.

**Mr Turner**

258. One of the points made to us earlier in an informal session was that white working class boys in particular have been told to be ashamed of everything about their culture. Do you agree with that?

(*Mr Cragg*) That is a pretty far-reaching statement. I could draw some parallels between what I believed in.

(*Mr Towers*) Been told to be ashamed about their culture?

Jeff Ennis: Do you mean lifestyle or culture?

**Mr Turner**

259. Perhaps what was meant was the stereotype of their culture.

(*Mr Cragg*) I think that is just such an oversimplistic statement really. What I do believe, and John has summed it up, is that we have got a huge set of issues about how we create positive and desirable role models and the point I was going to make, Chairman, was a demographic point. I personally believe that one of the biggest issues around African-Caribbean under-attainment is that we have got a secondary school employee population that is overwhelmingly white and middle class. I believe that makes a fundamental difference and it is the biggest challenge for us. It is interesting that in another place John and I both sit on the local City Strategic Partnership. One of the major focuses we have taken there is to look at demography from a public service and employment point of view. The one thing that will change behaviour and attitudes to staff is to reflect the diversity of the community in the way services are provided, especially in education. That will create the role model. We have got massive under-representation in most areas of our public services by the very communities we are trying to serve. We need to put a huge amount of effort into all of that. Incidentally, private sector employers in this city are starting to do that. One of the most significant pieces of work we have done around campaigning about these demographic issues is we have found in professional services a real awareness that for huge job growth they must do something economically about diversity. They have created a big new initiative on diversity, the Diversity Board, and they are taking that right into their own backyard and among their employers.

260. I am not putting that down but can we move back to my question.

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**[Mr Turner Cont]**

(*Mr Linton*) One of the things you said is paramount and that is reflected in what went on recently with the games in the World Cup. You had everyone flying the St George's flag without the fear of being shouted at that they were National Front. When you say working class white people are put in a box and are ashamed of their culture, maybe that is what it is sometimes. I went to Handsworth College when I left the Army to get to university. I went to Bournville which was logistically down the road, and they said basically they did not think I was the right type of candidate for them. What that meant I do not know. I ended up in Handsworth College in the fear of the 1980s riots, and all the rest of it, which was populated by West Indians and the Asian population. I was the minority in that particular area. However, I found them openly welcoming. I enjoyed my time there and I made some really good friends and got to university and that was the end result for me. At the time, however, in some of the political debates we had, it was pushed, if not sometimes forced, down my throat how we oppressed and continue in this country to oppress the minorities, the non-indigenous people. Sometimes we go too far on the right or left of what is rationally acceptable. In this city I do not think we have a real issue of racism any more because we are learning to live and grow up together as ordinary human beings.

(*Mr Towers*) To take that even further, Mark, I am not originally from Birmingham but one of the things I have noticed over the many years that I have been here, most particularly the recent years, is that there is a sense of a Birmingham identity here which I think is unparalleled in major city terms across the ethnic groups. I still do not follow Andrew's question.

Chairman: Nor does the Chairman! Put it in a different way.

Mr Turner: You were there when it was said.

Chairman: I heard what was said, I am not sure what you are trying to get at.

### Mr Turner

261. The assumption is that if you are ashamed of your culture and if you are ashamed of yourself you are not going to perform and the example that was given is that white boys adopt Jamaican patois as a means of conversing—and I am sure it applies to other groups as well—and if you are ashamed of yourself you are not going to perform. I am wondering if that is true.

(*Mr Ellison*) It covers both distinctions. We have talked about young whites and young African Caribbeans. I have had the great honour over the past couple of years of working with an African Caribbean company in Birmingham and my company has trained about 75 Jamaican people who are trainee students here. They are not British, they are from Jamaica and they have been over here relatively recently. They are all paying for their training, none of it is subsidised. The attitude is excellent and totally and completely different from the stereotypical attitude, even amongst the young lads. But what I will say is that I feel, in the two areas you come across, the level of literacy of 50-year-old African-Caribbean people, particularly Jamaican people, is very, very low. Could it not be a fact, rather

than me jumping to conclusions, that if you grow up in a household where your mother and father do not read and a household without books, how are you ever going to achieve? Similarly, some people from a working class background—and I am from a working class background and I certainly would not tell my son to be ashamed of it, quite the contrary—if you have not grown up with that stimulus, it is the stimulus that is missing that is the problem. That cannot be corrected in three or five years; it is going to take at least a generation.

(*Mr Towers*) Young people have had role models of varying degrees of acceptability over all of my lifetime. When I was 16 or 17 I found the role models that young people had terribly, terribly acceptable. As I have got older, the role models that young people have have become even less acceptable.

262. I would go along with that!

(*Mr Towers*) It is a thing that happens with young people. The interesting thing that we have today is that there is a multitude of variation of role models available now. If I go a long way back to when I was young we tended to run with the show. Maybe it was a choice between having a rocker as a role model or a mod as a role model. Today it is quite a complex world for young people. Young people love to have role models. If you happen to bump into someone who is taking the African-Caribbean pop jargon on, it is probably only a temporary issue. The fundamental question of self-esteem is not that. The fundamental question of self-esteem is a much, much more complicated factor. I do not think it is related to the same thing, but it is a role model issue. My greatest concern is the process whereby—and we will—we successfully tackle this question of smart to be lazy, smart to be out of it rather than smart to be into it, smart not to listen, smart not to get educated. If you took a general theme, that is the thing that we do have to tackle in those areas where you would expect inclusion in the process. Finally, however, there are much much more difficult areas where I do not think anybody has the answer yet. You were talking earlier about the Bangladeshi community and so on. That is a much more complicated social issue and complicated cultural issue. I do not think we are there yet.

### Jeff Ennis

263. I would like to come back to something that Mark touched on earlier in his contribution in terms of the need to improve the direct linkage between local businesses and local schools because it was something that cropped up this morning in the session we had with a group of Y11 girls at Turves Green Girls' School. They had just started year 11 and they had done their work experience at the back end of year 10. I said, "What did you think about work experience?" Their experiences of work experience, if you like. They said they thought it was absolutely fantastic. When I asked was it too long or too short, they said, "In our opinion, it was too short. We were only just getting to enjoy it." I think that is something you need to take away and think about in terms of improving the direct linkage between schools and local businesses. Having said that, looking at the broader issue of trying to bring the

*19 September 2002]*MR JOHN TOWERS, MR DAVID CRAGG,  
MR STEPHEN ELLISON AND MR MARK LINTON*[Continued]***[Jeff Ennis Cont]**

local businesses into networking and what have you, I am sure it is the same in Birmingham as it is in my area, we have a devil of a job to get SMEs involved. It is quite obvious what the reason is in some respects. It is because they have only got a few number of people working for them and they need to concentrate on the core business. It is really trying to emphasise to you people—and I would like your views on this—how can we enthuse SMEs to get involved more in work experience and other issues, where although there is no direct knock-on benefit, if you like, to their business, in broader terms it has massive knock-on implications?

(*Mr Towers*) The single biggest success we have had—and this cannot be a universal formula—is we have piloted an experiment many, many years ago starting in the car industry, in the automotive sector. There were many themes to this but one of the most powerful fundamental themes was the customers of those SMEs demanded and required their suppliers to work in that way and that made the biggest difference of any I can think of. The reason I say it is not a universal solution is because things do not always work that way, but we are trying the same process in other sectors. In addition to that, we are paying them, we are giving them money to do it. In addition to that, resources are being given for them to do it. I feel a little bit sad about this. I have had a lot of experience of the German industry and you do not have to spend a lot of time there to understand that ingrained as a matter of fact—and probably if you asked them to explain why it is so they would not be able to explain why it is so ingrained—is this sense of skills, qualifications, learning, and it is applicable to any job. It does not matter whether you are a skilled fitter or an engineer with a degree or a barman, you know what the necessary skills are to do that. You can be the best barman in town by having the right skills to be the best barman in town. I do not know what the magic ingredient is to get us there. If we had more of that then I think we would have a better participation rate.

**Paul Holmes**

264. Following on from what you just said—and earlier on you were talking about the need for apprenticeships for the older generation and a major profile of the population, to get them back into work—what about modern apprenticeships? Across the country people are saying they are not really taking off. How many have you got in this area?

(*Mr Cragg*) About 5,000ish. There is undoubtedly still a major task ahead of us to expand modern apprenticeships. The most important thing we have got to do is to get out of this box of competition at 16 or 17 of whether you go into full time education or you get into a modern apprenticeship. To go back to your observations, Chairman, about higher education, 65 per cent of young people do not go into higher education. Regrettably, we have not developed a sensible and practical culture of people who go and spend a year or two years in further education progressing on to a modern apprenticeship. The job is not done if you have done a full-time course. You need to develop specific work-related skills and to go into a job with further

training. One of the biggest breakthroughs we can make—and we see this as a priority for us—is to get a much higher progression rate between full-time education and training of all kinds and modern apprenticeships for those who do not go into higher education. With all this collaborative work we are doing across providers, we have now created sector development groups with colleges, especially those in individual vocational specialist areas, working with a whole network of local training providers to facilitate precisely that.

(*Mr Towers*) We continue to create an impression in most of the things that we do at a high political level that all apprentices are young people. We produce profound reports which seem to centre themselves around the fact that apprenticeships are, by and large, 18 to 21-year-olds and not much older than that.

Chairman: We have a member of this Committee who is slightly obsessed with plumbing and plumbers, probably quite rightly.

Jonathan Shaw: He is probably thinking about it now!

**Chairman**

265. He is the Member of Parliament for St Albans and he will not mind me saying this. The fact of the matter is, as he constantly says, in his part of the world a plumber today will earn between £50,000 and £60,000. John talks about role models. We have been round schools today where teachers have said, “If only we could get our young people interested and then employers interested in that leap into useful skills.” Here is a city crying out for electricians and plumbers, all those most useful construction trades. There does seem to be this gap, wherever one looks. Whether you use modern apprenticeships or whatever mechanism you use there does not seem to be the right relationship between young people who have skills and the potential to do those job role models who might come in and say, “I do this. I am extremely successful. I have a fulfilling life and I earn very good money . . .”

(*Mr Towers*) They are all on the golf course. We cannot get them to come in!

266. How do you as the Learning and Skills Councils meet this because it is a real problem?

(*Mr Cragg*) I am not going to, and I hope I have not done today, give you glib or flip solutions. I think it is about a whole set of planned actions. For example, take construction, what was absolutely clear to us from our construction review (because we developed what we are going to use as a public device which is the idea of a learning skills balance sheet to look at supply and demand) and we did that as a really interesting exercise. That balance sheet showed that the demand side was not being met at all by the supply side. Because of the fragmentation between institutions we had neither the breadth, the scale or the level required by the industry. My anecdote which I gave you before we came in over tea is that there were virtually no local people employed on the Bullring site for construction purposes. We have tackled a very specific issue. We have prioritised growth in that sector. We are creating what is needed because we are missing whole chunks of skills

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MINUTES OF EVIDENCE TAKEN BEFORE  
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[Continued

**[Chairman Cont]**

training required for the construction industry. Most of that work in the Bullring requires modern, sophisticated, prefabricated techniques. Nowhere in the whole of the city of Birmingham is training for those techniques. So the whole purpose of creating a new infrastructure, a big open site is so you can replicate the real activity which is going on on the ground. I think you went to Four Dwellings which is doing quite a lot on construction. Then you have got to be looking at all kinds of role modelling work, all kinds of work-related curriculum activities so you have got a whole range of things going on 14 to 16—and we very much welcome the changes to the national curriculum there—to allow us to introduce far more vocational options for the very kids who are dropping out. Not that we want just “stupid kids” to be doing vocational things, that is a terrible caricature; we want to open up the opportunities for kids who are turned off by the conventional national curriculum to do those things 14 to 16. It is a multiplicity of interventions and the other key thing, which is right at the heart of your question, is how do you engage employers? Again, we have tried and I think begun to succeed significantly in getting a much better structured engagement of whole groups of employers. We have done that sectorally again.

**Jonathan Shaw**

267. What about work experience for youngsters and the small business? Can the one-man band and plumbers provide placements?

(*Mr Linton*) I deal a lot with the SME market, it is part of my role, and I am sitting there seeing the ins and outs of what they have to do. You have the MD who is doing everything, running around, making sure the accounts are alright, running the operation of the business. What we are physically asking them is to give up some of their time and take on a school leaver or someone still at school and educate them. What they are forgetting or what they are not seeing in the foresight is these are our future. If we are not looking after these people, you are not going to have the right skill set coming into the employment market. How do we tackle that? How do we market it? The LSC is looking to have to pay these people. I think that is wrong. Yes, as an employer it is effectively fundamental that you get the core values of your job right, but if you are not looking at investing back into the community then you are not being a responsible employer in this city.

(*Mr Cragg*) We are not paying anyone for work experience, for the avoidance of doubt.

**Chairman**

268. John has a lugubrious expression.  
(*Mr Cragg*) He always looks like that!

**Jonathan Shaw**

269. Especially when dealing with Germans!  
(*Mr Towers*) A positive point is that anyone in this city who is part of the process that requires work experience gets it. The availability of work experience is not a problem. The variety and the type of work experience available is the problem. I would love to think that what Mark said could happen but just looking at the practical side of some of these SMEs, it cannot.

(*Mr Ellison*) Can I give you the practical side as the only SME person here. In my business, depending on how many sessional duties I have, I am employing micros to SMEs regularly. I just could not afford the time. The only person who I would want to help them to get a full overview of what the business is me. I cannot put somebody to sit next to one of my tutors in the classroom and be quiet all day when they are training. I cannot put them on work-based training; that does not happen. It is pointless sitting next to the receptionist because they will get that experience anywhere. If they want to know what it is like to work in my business they are going to have to shadow me, and I just have not got the time. I have got the will and I would love to do it, but if I do it then I reduce my earning capacity and who is going to pay my mortgage?

Chairman: Thank you very much. This has been a very good session for us. We have kept you a long time. Something that really comes over—and a lot of us have been involved and I personally have been involved in city and town regeneration for a long time—it does my heart good to see four people so committed to this city in various ways. I do not know how most of you have any time to see your families because you sit on so many different bodies! Thank you very much for your time.

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FRIDAY 20 SEPTEMBER 2002

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Members present:

Mr Barry Sheerman, in the Chair

Mr David Chaytor  
Valerie Davey  
Jeff Ennis

Paul Holmes  
Ms Meg Munn  
Jonathan Shaw

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**Memorandum from the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning and the Chief Education Officer (EB06)**

1. We are assuming that the Members of the Select Committee will have familiarised themselves with two documents in the briefing pack, in particular the self-assessment written prior to the latest OFSTED/Audit Commission inspection of the LEA and the OFSTED/Audit final report on the LEA itself.

2. Additional useful background, also in the pack, includes:

- the first report of the Chief Education Officer to the Education Committee in September 1993;
- the two Wragg Reports of 1993 and 1995;
- the Independent Commission into the future of Secondary Education in the City of Birmingham chaired by Sukvinder Stubbs in 1998.

3. Finally, the pack includes a draft of a paper the Chief Education Officer has been asked to deliver in London on 28 September<sup>1</sup>. As you can see, this deals extensively with the vexed question of secondary education in major conurbations. We shall be happy to answer questions on the ideas in the paper but for obvious reasons we are not anxious for media attention before the day of presenting the paper itself.

4. Our understanding is that the Select Committee's area of interest is urban education with a particular emphasis on secondary schooling.

5. It might be assumed, therefore, that nothing further needs to be added in written evidence. Yet there is. We want to make seven points beyond those outlined in this document.

5.1 The first relates to complexity and how each factor bears on another in large urban areas.

- the 28 September paper concludes that at least ten interrelating factors will have to be addressed simultaneously, and not in a mutually exclusive way, if the chronic and acute problems of secondary education are to be overcome. These interrelating issues have not been addressed coherently in government thinking;
- housing renewal policies and practices also impinge on schooling. (In Birmingham the example of Castle Vale is salutary in that respect.);
- neighbourhood renewal impacts on schooling and vice versa;
- accessible local jobs with many small steps on the lower rungs of the employment ladder have a beneficial impact on climate, especially if those jobs are seen to be provided in the services such as health and education which can combine further training with the self-respect and hope that a job provides;
- finally, health and policing policies and practices can have a profound impact on the environment in which school staff and pupils can do their jobs.

5.2 The second point relates to adolescence. It has always been a difficult time. Shakespeare (*A Winter's Tale*, Act III, Scene 3) refers to it in the following terms:

"I would there were no age between sixteen and three-and-twenty, or that youth would sleep out the rest; for there is nothing in the between but getting wenches with child, wronging the ancients, stealing, fighting . . .".

Nowadays, adolescence starts earlier, especially for girls, and ends later as the transition into adulthood becomes much longer. Many adolescents have very volatile self-esteem: they experiment and take risks. To confuse the teacher's efforts to help them learn they have a shame (arising from peer group pressure) of being seen to be a beginner—they need to be instant experts. In large conurbations the anonymity of neighbourhoods increases the risks facing adolescents—as does the fact that conurbations are places to which those fleeing from "authority" gravitate.

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<sup>1</sup> Not printed.

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PROFESSOR TIM BRIGHOUSE

*[Continued]*

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In short, adolescents have never faced more challenge in making transition from childhood to adulthood: and nowhere is it more difficult to navigate than in the inner-city and the outer-ring estates. It is absolutely essential that each youngster has a worthwhile relationship with at least one adult whom they trust—and that they feel special.

5.3 The third concerns access. Access not ownership is of key importance. So the great royal parks (St James', Regent's), the public squares and many other places are a delight in urban areas. There are other factors of "common wealth"—the theatres, the convention centres, the great sports stadia, the universities, the great libraries and museums—which are all to be found disproportionately in urban areas. Access to them and the talented people who work in the conurbations is a key issue for counter-balancing the challenges which disadvantaged youngsters face. We have only scratched the surface in terms of access. But there are other aspects to access—not least to a good secondary education. That is where the 28 September paper seeks to resolve some apparently irreconcilable pressures.

5.4 The fourth relates to what comes before and what follows secondary schooling. Birmingham's "Flying Start" programme, run by pre-school workers chosen for their qualities not qualifications, seems to us a much better and more rapid way of achieving what the national "Sure Start" programme is seeking to do. Nevertheless, the present government's investment in birth to five services is certain to pay off over a couple of generations. Primary schooling—particularly the quality of staffing—has never been better. What we must do is achieve far better primary to secondary transition.

So far as what follows secondary education is concerned, the collegiate which we advocate would have the capacity (which some schools have not) to work with colleges in providing safer pathways with the help of the Connexions Service to access either full-time education and training, or jobs with training. Transition at 16 at present is only marginally less dangerous to vulnerable individual students than it is at 11.

5.5 The fifth issue concerns parents. In Birmingham, until recently, we have been poor in forging close links with parents, despite it being one of the declared seven processes of school improvement. In the last three or four years we have made significant progress through the promotion of the INSPIRE programme, which seems to work in every primary school where it has been tried. It is simple in design and involves teachers, pupils and parents in worthwhile workshops. Over 250 primary schools have now been involved. Something similar is needed in secondary schools.

5.6 Sixthly, interdisciplinary working among staff of different agencies is also a matter which impinges most on the most vulnerable. Very few, if any, protocols exist for translating partnership planning into partnership working on the ground. So, for example, job descriptions created by one professional silo do not generally include duties and responsibilities relating to another, with the outcome that the most vulnerable get the worst service. There are many other factors (eg case conference dates, shared data, shared targets, shared premises, rooms for other professionals) that need to be co-ordinated, synchronised and synthesised.

5.7 Finally, there are viruses in the system which get in the way of young people succeeding. Housing allocation; admission criterion; league tables; assessments which are summative and informative to other audiences—rather than formative and diagnostic—are all examples of potential systemic viruses that can militate against success for everyone, especially the most challenged youngsters.

6. We should like to make three final points in conclusion. The first concerns the extent to which we understand issues affecting race, nationality and religion—and the importance of making rapid progress on all of these.<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, we cannot emphasise too strongly the disproportionate need in cities for energy, skill, commitment and optimism among staff, especially teachers. In Birmingham we are fond of saying we are a "can-do" city. This arises from an energy that brooks no denial. In a sense the story of inner-city education is a battle between the energy creators and the energy consumers, between people who see the glass as half full and those who see it as half empty, between the silver linings and the clouds, between the "How we could's" and the "Why we can't's". If we are making any progress in Birmingham that is exceptional, it is because the first group are winning and the second group are losing. That battle is as important today and tomorrow as it was yesterday and the day before.

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<sup>2</sup> "When I arrived in Birmingham in 1993 I knew a lot about school improvement, teaching, learning and, to some degree, the way local education authorities could be made to work effectively. I knew far too little about issues affecting race, nationality and religion. I took too long to be sufficiently confident in these matters—to achieve a platform of sufficient learning from which to have the confidence to publicly speculate and learn more. In consequence, we have made nowhere near the progress in closing the gap for underachieving groups and in opening ourselves up to the views of different communities. I believe now we are on the right track, but it is one we should have found more rapidly."  
(Speech by the Chief Education Officer to representatives of the Muslim Community of Birmingham—Summer 2002.)

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*[Continued*

Finally, there is a point to be made about the democratic local input. We have strived for courageous and generous leadership—at officer level and, vitally, from the city politically, without which nothing could have been accomplished. The City Council has been steadfast in priority and properly challenging. By that we mean it has set policy and not confused it with management. The democratic local process brings the “bright light of ordinariness” to all our proceedings.

Councillor Roy Pinney  
Cabinet Member for  
Education & Lifelong Learning

Professor Tim Brighouse  
Chief Education Officer

*September 2002*

### Examination of Witness

PROFESSOR TIM BRIGHOUSE, Chief Education Officer, Birmingham City Council, was examined.

#### Chairman

270. Can I welcome Professor Tim Brighouse to our proceedings and to say before we commence our questioning that we have certainly had a most enjoyable week in this fair city. The original idea was to roll up our sleeves and really get to know the local education authority and its area. We took some considerable time before we decided on Birmingham. I think all of us would agree that we decided on the right place to come, not only because of the way in which everyone we have met has been anxious to open doors, to talk to us frankly, and to share their knowledge and their insights as well as their concerns and everything else, but also because here is a city which I think someone on the Committee said only on Wednesday, “You can read about how big education is in Birmingham, but it is only when you have been to half a dozen schools and moved around the city for a few days that you realise this is an enormous undertaking.” Thank you very much, Professor Brighouse, for putting so many facilities at our disposal. To come to this morning, if you felt you wished to, would you like to say a few words to open the discussion we are going to have with you?

*(Professor Brighouse)* That is kind and you have wrong-footed me straightaway because I was expecting to undergo a grilling! I merely say I have given you a statement which outlines the urban challenge. In that statement I gave you there is a paper on secondary education—which I intend to give at the end of the month and I do not mind cross-questions on that but for obvious reasons I do not want it in the public domain before I give it because it is a bit unfair to the people to whom I am presenting the paper—and I also gave you a paper where I outlined various points that it seems to me worth emphasising, things like birth to five, things like under-achieving groups, and my getting to grips with that I thought rather later than I should have done, and I have outlined what I think about all of those. One thing with the benefit of hindsight I wish I had said in all the written material is around transition from primary to secondary school. I know that is your focus. It seems to me that in large metropolitan urban areas, the larger the place, the easier the transport arrangements, the bigger the problem, then the transition from primary to secondary school is a huge issue, made large by the fact that, first of all, there is the simple logistics of so

many children from different schools going into a receiving secondary school, so that that militates already against links that you could reasonably propose to make between primary and secondary. That is one issue connected with it. The other issue is that it is really, really difficult in a very large metropolitan area—and I suspect that may be shielded from other metropolitan areas by having lots of small authorities—to know exactly where all the children have gone. It always haunts me and it has haunted clearly my predecessors if you look in the archives—and I do mean right the way back in history—as to in these very large conurbations there are children who are in most challenging circumstances where there might be a collusion between the home and the child not to get the child to school at all. So there is both the problem of the figurative loss of children with children figuratively not being at school once they get to secondary school and then there is the real issue of children who may not actually be at school. The difficulty is that up to now we have never been quite sure whether they are not at school or whether they have merely moved, as hard as you chase it with welfare officers. There are frequently cases where they genuinely have moved but occasionally you come across cases where they have managed to elude, as it were, our responsibilities and the parent has colluded in failing to get the child to school and children do not get a fair start in life. There is a haunting sepia echo of the Dickensian world in that description. I want to raise that point of primary to secondary transfer because I think it is a really key issue. I think there are lots of things government could do. The Government is going to do something around introducing, I think, some fairly obligatory—and I would make them mandatory—units of transfer in terms of the curriculum between primary and secondary. But I think there are lots of other things that could be done such as the way secondary schools organise themselves in year seven in order not to figuratively lose children in the early months and years of secondary education. That would be my extra point beyond the ones you have already got.

271. Thank you for that. Can I start the questioning proper by asking you what may seem a rather mundane question and that is what do you feel about the importance of a head, the qualities a head? We have seen some extraordinary heads of schools as

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PROFESSOR TIM BRIGHOUSE

*[Continued*

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**[Chairman Cont]**

we have moved around the city this week. How important is that head? And how important is a head when you have got a difficult school and for all sorts of reasons—changing population, close to the city centre, all the things that we know about—it is a difficult to manage school and then along comes a superb head who is able to turn it around? What should a head put into operation to make sure that when that head moves on to a new promotion or job or even retirement that that school stays in a good position?

*(Professor Brighouse)* Could I just with a preliminary say that I think there are things that we can do systemically and a lot of those are covered in the second half of the paper that I have given you. That is to say I think secondary schools on their own in heavy metropolitan urban circumstances can do so much, and they do a great deal—and in the circumstances you describe (and I will reflect on the real direction of your question) do extraordinarily well—but I do think that schools on their own cannot do it all. Clearly, I mean that both in respect to other services that need to give support and the impact on employment and housing in an area where there may be challenging circumstances, but I also mean in terms of collegiality, of schools working together. Coming back directly to your question, headteachers and the leadership of a school is important in any circumstances and in the circumstances which you describe it is crucial and they need an extraordinary degree of the characteristics and habits and skills of leadership which you would identify anyway in any school circumstance. We could have a long discussion about what those characteristics are, but it certainly would be to do with energy, certainty, hope, purpose, moral endeavour, a remarkable gift of relationships, and a huge energy. Certainly energy is the quality that I think is present to a remarkable degree in Birmingham and it has been deliberate to foster that energy. I have always believed that there are energy creators and energy consumers. If you said optimists and pessimists or half full and half empty or silver lining and cloud, “how we could” or “why we can’t”, you get an impression of what I mean. In an urban circumstance where there are huge challenges, the energy creators are important. If the head has not got that in those circumstances—and it is very difficult to describe what he has to have and he has to have that genuinely—then the link is lost. You have seen one or two of those characters in your visits. What I think they could do, irrespective of my point about collegiality, is to grow leadership in the school. That is tremendously important. I always regret that there are so many good ideas that we have never carried out. The one simple good idea that if I had my time over again I would want to say, “This should not remain a good idea, we should do it”, is when a person is appointed to a headship, the next day after the governors make the appointment, they should be invited to go to, before they take up the position, three schools in very comparable circumstances so they have an in depth look at what three other places have done. I do not mind whether it is well or whether it is badly, but they definitely need that comparative information before they come into a school they take over. The second thing I would do, which we do not do for these systematic changes, is give them a leadership coach. I have been

immensely impressed as the years have gone on by the subtlety of coaching and its power. I have used two coaches during the last ten years (and I did not use them before) for myself and for my team. I think coaching is important. If you appointed a coach when a new head came into such a situation, the coach would be growing leadership not of that person who has taken over the role but throughout the school, whether it at the crucial middle level, which in a secondary school can be absolutely appalling, or whether it or lower down. I would want those two things to happen. I have noticed that whether it is intuitive or deliberate, those schools which survive the departure of a really successful head have done that, they have grown leadership throughout the school so, as it were, it has got a momentum that will carry on, and it has created a position where in more favourable socio-economic circumstances they can survive less inspirational less energetic leadership. It is almost as though the conductor has left the room and the orchestra can continue to play, but not for long. What I really want to say is that however much you grow the leadership, if that central leadership is not still providing the same value system, acting as a commentator, story teller, seeing the wider horizon and making good judgments, in the end it will start to fracture.

272. Of course you know what I am going to say next and that is you are moving on. It is very evident that is like a head moving on. Are there similar lessons that you just told the Committee that a head should learn about how to pass on what he has bought to a school or she has bought to a school? Do you think you have been successful in putting all that in place for what happens here in Birmingham after your departure at the end of this month?

*(Professor Brighouse)* First, a caution. The first thing to say is that it is not a school and what I was describing was a school. It is slightly different and the influence of a local education authority over what happens in schools is less powerful than the influence of a headteacher. I would think it is less powerful than the national influence now because what people wake up to on Radio 4 or Radio 5, or whatever they are listening to, I must be careful, affects their climate as they are going into school each day, and how teachers go into school each day affects how children learn. If they are going in in the morning and they are in not in a “can do” frame of mind, it affects children’s learning. There is no doubt about it. The national scene affects that. What we can do locally is try to affect it and try to provide services and perhaps provide an example of talking about teaching and learning and school improvement and all the things that you know are going on in good schools. We have done that. The second thing to say is, yes, there is remarkably good leadership, indeed there has had to be, throughout the services in Birmingham to overcome the deficiencies, and there are many deficiencies, in my leadership and my management. There is in all people’s leadership and management. It is a question of being realistic about where your weak suites are and trying to make sure that they are recognised and you are recognising them and you are trying to get people in to make sure that they do not cause serious damage.

273. Thank you.

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**[Chairman Cont]**

(*Professor Brighouse*) There is a super successor as well by the way. I am fond of saying he is the Bob Paisley to my Shankly.

Chairman: I must comment in passing that I also think that what a teacher listens to on Radio 4 and Radio 5 in the morning is very important, and very often the best decision I make is not to go on it at all!

**Jonathan Shaw**

274. I do not know if they are going to have some memorial gates outside the Council House.

(*Professor Brighouse*) I trust not for a while!

275. You mention children not going on to secondary school. We visited the Women's Academy and we met a young woman who when she was 13 did not go to secondary school because her family would not countenance the idea of her going to a mixed school, and so it was not until she was able to go to the Women's Academy that she was able to get the qualifications that she has now and she is in employment. Do you see that as a particular issue for particular Muslim communities in terms of youngsters dropping out of school because of family pressures? Are you referring to particular ethnic groups here?

(*Professor Brighouse*) I think we are referring to a religious group and the complications of faith, religion, nationality and race are extremely intricate and sensitive. There is no doubt at all that Islam has brought to the city a great wealth of new mutual understandings. Its culture has enriched the city. It is a culture I have been delighted to work with. I am pleased that we have got two Muslim aided schools. I regret that in 1940 we did not take religion out of the school system but I am realistic, it is within the school system, and, frankly, in a city where 20 to 30 per cent of the primary and secondary population would claim that they came from a Muslim background, it seems rather odd that we have not got more aided schools. Historically we have inherited a position where there are other major faiths represented. That is one thing. The other thing to say about Islam, and there is a lot to say, is that it is a less coherently organised religion than the other major faiths, so that each mosque and each Imam has a considerable amount of independence from another mosque and another Imam. So there is difficulty in talking to those who represent that faith. When I say there is a difficulty, there is that difficulty but that should not excuse the fact that most people have some Islamophobia and are not very clever at wanting to learn about Islam. Within Islam there are lots of different cultural assumptions that are rooted in national and even sub-national traditions. If I said to you Al-Hijrah is a co-educational Islamic school, which it is, and that it teaches girls and boys separately but they are within one school community and organised as one school community, there you have one tradition. There will be people within the Islamic tradition who say that is wrong and that it should be entirely separate. There will be people within the Islamic tradition who would say it needs to be co-educational. Pragmatically within Birmingham we have the problem, which must appear to be very odd to Islamic eyes, that in those parts of the city which are not Islamic there are high

numbers of girls only places. They beat a track to the doors of those schools so that proportionately they have found what they want in those schools but overall, and the same is true of Islam as it is of any other faith or national population—when you ask parents what they want of secondary education, in a free vote, as it were, in an urban area—nobody would think of this in a county or rural area and it is another difference between the large metropolitan urban areas—60 per cent will say they want single sex education for their girls but they want co-education for their boys. This leads to an imbalance and it does prove that in the large metropolitan urban areas—and I really will say it is the large metropolitan urban areas I am talking about—what you have got is an imbalance of boys to girls within the co-educational schools. If you look at OFSTED evidence, it is a much steeper task to create a successful environment in an imbalanced co-educational school. Whether that is to do with the maturation of boys and girls during adolescence and the habits and traditions of boys and girls—I suspect it is and that is why I am speculating about the issue. There are some children who I suspect are not in school for that reason, although less than when that 13-year-old was a 13-year-old because there are lots of independent schools as well as Al-Hijrah and I suspect there will be more Muslim aided secondary schools.

276. Is it inevitable that there will be more maintained schools?

(*Professor Brighouse*) If we are to have faith secondary schools it is desirable that there should be. It is intolerable that there should not be if we have faith secondary schooling. I am parking on one side as to whether I would have faith secondary school.

**Ms Munn**

277. I want to come on to this issue about leadership and heads and your role. You seem to be saying that you feel that the local education authority role in terms of how they work with the schools is perhaps less influential than the national scene. What was very clear to us is that not only did the heads that we saw have a lot in common in the way they are, exactly as you describe—inspirational, full of energy, very purposeful—but also, without exception, they talked about what you had provided to them in terms of creating the culture and creating support. We had three headteachers who sat there and said, "On my first day in the job Tim Brighouse was there." The fact that you are within the schools a lot gives a powerful message. This is a huge authority with a lot of the educational establishments and you were walking the job, as they say, and getting out and doing that. What were you not able to do, making the assumption that you gave that priority?

(*Professor Brighouse*) I gave that priority but there were lots of things I could not do. By the way, one of the reasons I am going is because I cannot keep up doing that. Once you have been a leader in a single position for a long time it is very, very difficult and because your lines of obligation become so extended and so many people have calls on your time, it is hard to keep up with the little things. You have to work flat out in order to win the credit or have the influence that you know you ought to have. It is partly because

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[Continued

**[Ms Munn Cont]**

I have run out of that that I ought to go. Exactly the same happened to me within Oxfordshire. It might be age but I think it is both age and length of time in the job. What did I not do? First of all, do not underestimate the fact that you can do two or three or four things at once. It is one of the things that is a quality of a good teacher anyway. That is a quality I hope I have taken on into other activities. Using time twice or three times over is a clever thing to do. For example, if I write a note to schools commending something that they have done, which I might do quite a lot—you probably heard I do quite a lot—I always try to mention somebody else that has told me about it because then you are reinforcing the position of the other person. Are you with me? While you are about schools you can ask questions that help in other regards. If you plan it well enough you can be doing other things while you are about it. If you get up very early you can be in school before most people are in work because most of the heads are in school, so you could meet a whole staff of a school and a head and apparently intensively be there and be in the office by quarter past nine. It is a question of using time cleverly and doing more than one thing. But very early on I did say that it seemed to me that I must spend all my time in schools (which I did) partly because there are things about the organisation of the place that I did not like. I thought it was too reactive to crisis. The same is happening in one of the other major departments and we are gradually getting that right, I think. It was too reactive to crisis so rather than be in the office I was out doing things. I thought somebody else can handle the crises. You know how it is! We wanted to get out of crisis and into being proactive, and I also wanted restructure the place a little bit. Most people fall into a mistake or the right thing—and in my case I think it was the right thing. I inherited a matrix management right across the department. I cannot handle that. I do admire those who can. The whole of our advisory service is now run on a matrix system and is brilliantly run but I cannot handle it, so I wanted to change it because I have not got the skill to do it. So for the first six months I was spending my time in schools. As it turned out, all sorts of things were happening in that first six months which redounded to my advantage. I did not realise I was doing it. For example, all the people I was meeting were members of political parties. I was not conscious of this but I could not have thought of a better thing to do because there was a political message going back as well as an educational message about what was happening. I was also blessed with a political colleague, Andy Howell, who I think you have met, who I got on instantly and effortlessly with, and he was taking care of a lot of things and would joke and slightly tweak me about, “Where’s Tim? You never see him”, but we were meeting in the evenings over meals and we worked in very close partnership and he was taking care of a lot of the things, including the crises, thank heaven. But that is what we did.

278. So what did you not do?

(*Professor Brighouse*) I did not do a lot of the central stuff for the first six or nine months.

279. What are the implications of not doing that? What I am trying to get at is if we are to look at lessons and things that we can learn from an authority which certainly has not got everything right—

(*Professor Brighouse*)—There are loads of things we have not got right.

280.—But it has got a lot right and there is a lot of improvement going on, so should we be saying effectively to other local education authority chief executives “Get out there”? Is that the right message? Were there real down sides to not doing some of those central things?

(*Professor Brighouse*) No, I do not think there were because I had a really good partnership with the politicians, the political leaders. Local democracy is hugely important. The quality of that leadership is hugely important. I have been remarkably blessed by the quality of the political leadership I have shared. Therefore it becomes a partnership and you can cover for each other. If you take Andy Howell, Sandra Jenkinson and Roy Pinney, they can talk persuasively and with feeling about educational matters. Are you with me? The teachers and the school community like it, so you can start to be supplementary and complementary. What you have got to do is cover the lot and decide when to take risks, when not to take risks, and where you are with the key issues that might foul you all up. You recognise this scene. It would not be a good idea to be out in the schools if you were not doing the right things when you were in the schools. I can think of people, if they went into school I would rather they did not. So it would depend on what your skills were. I have seen local education authorities make a remarkable difference to their schools without doing it in the style in which I have done it. So they can make a difference. I have just remarked that more recently because of a combination of central control and prescription and the media, you begin to argue that that central influence on the schools is much greater than it was 15 or 20 or 25 years ago.

**Valerie Davey**

281. I would like to take that up in a different context. National government is very keen to see children’s education improve. That is obviously the absolute *raison d’être* of all that you have done. One of the key elements in that has been setting targets, but when the Government talks about setting targets and when you talk about setting targets there are fundamental differences. Can you explain that to us again. I know you have written about it. Can you explain why it is so important in your estimation that the Government changes?

(*Professor Brighouse*) It would be worth your reading, by the way, if you are going to carry on with the secondary review, a paper by Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam from King’s College London which is around what they would now call “assessment for learning” or “formative assessment”. I will try and get a copy of the paper and get it to you via the Clerk. Basically the best form of assessment in schools is where the teacher shares the map of learning with the children and an individual child and so it is really well-directed, and where the children therefore know

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**[Valerie Davey Cont]**

where the next steps of learning are in a quite finely-tuned way. I could show you the marking of children's work where the teacher in the marking of the work is inviting the children to reflect on that practice, to share it with another pupil, who would then comment on the children's work and the first pupil would come back again and the teacher reflects again. This is taking some of the work out of it by engaging other people in the assessment process. The teacher will set the target for the next bit of work for the child to learn. That is setting targets and it is about pace, it is about improving against your previous best and, with the best teacher, it could produce a paced learning. It is formative assessment or assessment for learning, as it would now be called. That is where it starts. The clever teacher with a group of children actually harnesses that as a group and thinks of it as a team effort and promotes the team effort in order that collectively they try to achieve the same things. Some of our secondary schools, incidentally, have done that so well that when it comes to the vexed issue of setting—and we assume you are not streaming—they have shared the definitions of the levels so well that the children are invited in year nine and year eight to set themselves, ie which group is your next bit of learning in, and, lo and behold, the children have set themselves, overcoming the dangers of another person putting you down. In other words, the kids have done the assessment. Such schools are very few and far between but it seems to me they are on a very important track. In all of that in Birmingham, at the beginning, we knew we had to overcome “what more can you expect from children with a background like that”, on the one hand, and parents saying “school never did me any good, so just keep your nose clean” and who now say “there is no job for you anyway, so forget about it”, but would have said “there is a job for you at the works”. Instead of a culture of being resigned, which historical inheritance would have had us do, we should say how do we get the thing moving? So we started with a primary guarantee. That was the big debate and very significant and hugely important because we talked about targets of input, targets of experience and targets of outcome. The words “primary guarantee” are important because people disputed the guarantee and said how can you guarantee. The fact is you cannot. We had a long debate about the guarantee. We had endless debates about when you do not get what you guaranteed. We start thinking of buying stuff and it has got a guarantee and if it goes wrong what do you do. We made a pledge together of what we were committed to do. Firstly, there were targets of input, about resource, about improving our services, about bringing our schools into contact with national and international expertise, trying to increase learning targets for the teacher (ie, unless they are learning—the example I was mentioning). Secondly, there were targets of experience. We had only five in Birmingham for primary kids. Firstly, they should take part in a public performance. Secondly, they should have a residential experience. Thirdly, somebody should identify with them what they are good at in the expressive arts and give them an experience or a chance to develop that within the expressive arts—music, whatever it might be. (I am thinking of music). A fourth would be designing

together and planning and producing a book or a multi media for another age group and then critiquing it. A fifth would be the issue of in the last year of primary taking on an environmental project, where they would be involved in the scientific method and survey and get at issues that are of common concern. At the moment we are being inspected. I approached this morning as, “Oh my God, this is another inspection” but you are being, I think, very kind so far! Just at the moment we have got a “comprehensive performance assessment” and they witnessed a great debate about rubbish in the city. It is a matter that anybody in a metropolitan area will understand. Environmental sustainability issues are crucial to the metropolitan urban areas so them taking part in an environmental project is important. Then there were targets of outcome and they were around literacy and mathematics. There is no doubt that an incoming Labour Government looked at what we were doing and decided they would do something similar but instead of pitching it in the round, the message got lost nationally. This is perhaps where I am contradicting much of that. That is to say you cannot have that debate that we had with thousands of teachers where I would say when it comes to setting targets for literacy and numeracy, of course you have good years and bad years, but set ambitious targets and set modest targets but always set the ambitious ones because you never know and you will learn from setting them. That is bottom-up not top down and what they have done is top down. Sir Michael Bichard, who I understand is a great friend of yours—

**Chairman**

282. We are a friendly Committee.

(*Professor Brighouse*) He came to Birmingham before the Government won power in 1997 to see what we were doing and he said, “I cannot imagine central government ever being able to set targets.” I should have kept a note of that meeting because it all looks very odd now. But that is how we saw it and still see it and that is why you find schools not afraid to set aspirational targets because on the whole I will not write letters to them cursing them for not hitting their targets, even if I am being cursed for not hitting my targets.

Valerie Davey: Can I just add I think your self setting of targets and assessment leads to a whole different aspect of the assessment in OFSTED but I will not enter that. If that can be said.

**Jeff Ennis**

283. You compared yourself earlier with Bill Shankly. Bill Shankly's most famous quote was: “football isn't a matter of life or death; it is more important than that”.

(*Professor Brighouse*) I echo that.

284. You have obviously got a passion for education and that passion has rubbed off on all the heads and teaching staff and other staff we have met this week. There is obviously a range of factors or issues that inhibit individual performance amongst children. Have you ever sat down and tried to rank

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[Jeff Ennis Cont]

them in terms of severity in inhibition of their personal performance? Which is the most important factor or is it not possible to do that?

(*Professor Brighouse*) Until you got right to the end of that I was not quite sure where you were heading and I did not know how to answer, therefore if I have got it wrong tell me. I commend you again to look at a document that Young Minds produced about children's and adolescents' health, and mental health in particular, and they ran into a set of risks and resilience factors. I think that we should be much more focused on what the risk factors are with children and what the resilience factors might be. This is a debate that were I still going to be working I would want to promote particularly in urban areas—and we have floated these ideas amongst lots of heads—which is you would say, “Yes, if you pick up that model, which I found invaluable”. They talk about genetic issues, and there are some, but they are about ten per cent of the issue. 90 per cent of the issue is social and economic, so if you looked at summer born and being a boy it is a disadvantage compared to being autumn born and a girl. Both those factors matter. If you look at some of the class systems then some of the languages from the Asian sub-continent are related to caste and therefore if you know that, this is where you do need deep cultural knowledge, you would say if a child is speaking a certain heritage language perhaps we ought to be on the watch for that child. That child will be amongst their peer group thought not so well off as another language. I am not going to because this is a public record go into which those languages would be. So there is that as well. Perhaps if I were a secondary school and accepting kids perhaps for the intake in year seven, I would be thinking of how many primary schools have they attended? Are they from a background where education has not amongst the family gone beyond 16 before? What has the child's attendance record been at primary? What is the genuine view of their “at risk” worry about the kids making it in the secondary environment. You remember my first point about figuratively lost and you know what I am getting at in terms of making the transition—all of those, plus the issue of special educational need, plus the issue of race and ethnic origin. All those are issues which you would want to take into account to make sure that you were looking at the risk analysis of particular kids. Then in terms of resilience factors, you would say what are the interventions we can make with those kids which would make a difference? Some of them will be extremely simple. I do know schools that having done that will amongst the whole staff say, “You have got Fazana and you have got Jane and you have got Haroon and that means that you, David, when you are coming into school or when you are in corridor or when you are on lunch time could you try to strike up conversations with those kids?” Some do that but there are lots of other things you would do like residential and aiming high, etcetera.

285. You did not specifically mention parental involvement.

(*Professor Brighouse*) That is hugely important. I thought you were talking about the school. Parental involvement is crucial and we have not done it very well in Birmingham. We got into it late, but we

certainly brought out the Inspire programme which is really, really good. With particular kids with barriers to their learning, the more you can involve the parent the better.

#### Chairman

286. That is very good if there is a parent and certainly a parent who wants to be involved. One of the teachers we met only yesterday after we have had all our formal presentation came up to me and said, “I must say this to you: part of my job is liaising between our children and the parents and a big deficiency”—these were particular children who had difficulties at school—“is they do not have parenting and the parents do not have any support. They do not know how to be a good parent and they are not helped to be a good parent.” But, interestingly enough, you talked earlier about transition and how you were particularly interested in and concerned about that transition from primary to secondary. One of the things we picked up from Birmingham from a lot of the teachers and heads is this transition from 16 into the rest of life. There was a very real concern that we picked up here about what happens. After a good education, even a good educational experience with some qualifications at the end, they say, “We have not got any remit to find out what happens to the people we put so much work into. They go off. If we are not careful they will go home, close the door, turn the television on or go to bed and will not emerge again and we know there are so many of them who do not go into the next stage of education, who do not go into employment, who do not go into anything.” It got members of the Committee afterwards discussing this. Perhaps we are waiting for Connexions to do this but at the moment who tracks our young people when we leave them at 16?

(*Professor Brighouse*) I think the answer to that is, first of all, you have put your finger on an area—you know you were asking me what did I not give priority to—which I have not given priority to properly and that is post-16, and I should have done. It is partly because the indicators suggest we are not doing too badly at 18, but we were not doing well earlier, and if you are going to make an effort you are going to focus on that. That is the first thing to say. The second thing to say the answer to your question straightforwardly is no-one. When Connexions is in place the likelihood is that someone will, but at the moment I think the transition at 16 is poor, although not as poor as it used to be. More and more are staying on. More and more are being counselled by their schools and worried about by their schools to make sure they have some further full-time education or a job. When you take further evidence it would be a good idea to pick up on this issue, not using the Birmingham experience. I do not think you have taken evidence from the Careers and Business Partnership which will turn into Connexions. They would say to me, “You are on the board, you should know, you should have told the Select Committee that each year you get a tracking document. You should have told them about the work we do to try to track the kids who are outside the system”, which they do. I am telling you but I am saying I think you

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**[Chairman Cont]**

have put your finger on something that is worrying in an urban circumstance, probably not as worrying as the year seven. I have given talks about "Mind the gap" because the gaps are really very hazardous. Whether it is the long summer holiday or whether, frankly, for some kids it is the hours between 4 o'clock and 9 o'clock the next morning, the gaps are hazardous.

**Mr Chaytor**

287. This week OFSTED and the Audit Commission have published their report on LEA schools improvement from 1996 to 2001, and the report concludes unequivocally that "good LEAs have a beneficial effect on some aspects of performance of pupils and schools, but the effect is not great. There is no proven relationship between the quality of an LEA and the overall standard of attainment. The expectation that LEAs should have a major effect on pupils' standards appears unrealistic." This was published before Birmingham was inspected. Do you think that they will need to revise that judgment when they assimilate the Birmingham inspection into the future report or do you think that that judgment remains valid across the board?

(*Professor Brighouse*) You have had witnesses earlier in the week and you will have asked that question of OFSTED themselves. You will have read their report and you will know, therefore, whether they feel they need to revise their judgment. From my point of view, I believe that you need to read that document as you have read it. That is to say that they are not denying that some LEAs in some respects can have an influence. When it comes to a school that is in trouble, there is no doubt an LEA has an effect. If it did not, heaven knows what would happen to that school. Somebody has got to intervene. I have tried to impress that you can, by very hard work and reasonable organisation and creating a climate, diminish the likelihood of things going wrong and marginally increase the likelihood of things going right. I would have wanted to write that a bit more carefully than it has been written, but even in the way it has been written if you lined that up with what I said earlier about the national influence and the media, then it would appear to be on all fours with what you are describing there, would it not? I do not want to over-claim the influence of an LEA. I think it is hugely important and I would not want it any other way. I have described the democratic political interface that was crucial, and you seem to think, and so does OFSTED, that we have made remarkable progress. Therefore, the LEA appears to have had an impact. Across the country only they can judge whether that is replicated elsewhere.

288. In your experience here, do you think that is an under-statement of what is possible?

(*Professor Brighouse*) Yes, it would be an under-statement. Indeed, if you read their OFSTED report of this LEA you could not come to that general conclusion. In fairness, they have come to a general conclusion and it is carefully written. I could have wished that they would have described the case studies that illustrate the exception to the general conclusion in order that from those case studies other

practice would change. The issue that I regret deeply is our equality gaps. You could say to me why have you not given prominence to the good practice in Regent's Park, in Cherry Orchard with Afro-Caribbean children, in Hamstead Hall and in Moseley? Because we have not got to those case studies early enough to give them the prominence they undoubtedly deserve because other schools will beat a path to their door to learn from their practice and indeed are doing within Birmingham. It is always incumbent on all of us, whether we are OFSTED or LEA, to describe where things are going well rather than give too much prominence to general conclusions, which might depress the energy. What I want to do is to raise the energy and say we are within a touch of cracking the issue of under-achievement of particular groups. I believe that to be true. I could almost believe that the same could be said of LEAs if they learn from each other's good practice.

289. You are looking for OFSTED to publish a handbook of good practice?

(*Professor Brighouse*) I would love to see it.

290. In terms of the relative influence of LEAs and national government and the individual school, how would you put a figure on that in percentage terms? What is the balance of influence?

(*Professor Brighouse*) It is really rather like saying, if we played around the issue, which I think you should do in your visits and in looking at secondary schools, of the relative weights to put on, shall we say, Gardner's different forms of intelligence—spacial, musical, kinesthetic, literacy and numeracy. You would weight more important the literacy and numeracy skills as a platform for achieving in other areas. If you were marking out of ten, that the weighting I would give to the influence of the school is something like a factor of eight. If you then said the national weighting, it would be round about four and the LEA weighting round about three. In other words, the school is a disproportionately important unit in terms of whether it thrives or does not. The national weighting is about half that. The best schools simply ignore what is happening nationally, quite rightly so; they simply get on with what they are doing. The LEA just marginally less. In our case you might argue marginally more. Are you with me? Because of the example of good practice.

291. In terms of the impact of national policy you have got here in Birmingham a hugely fragmented and hierarchical system of secondary education. Do you think that government policy in terms of admissions and diversity and the differential institutional responsibilities at post-16 is helping or hindering you bringing coherence and stability to the 11 to 19 age group? Which aspects of government policy on admissions, diversity and post-16 are most helpful and which are least helpful?

(*Professor Brighouse*) Admissions needs substantial attention, and they are giving it some attention but they really do need to examine the criteria for admissions and they need to make sure that there is some body that is insisting that those criteria for admissions are observed so they need to take a view on what are the correct criteria for admissions. They ought in large metropolitan urban areas insist on the clearing house system. The

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**[Mr Chaytor Cont]**

presence of independent appeal is good. Let me say, they have moved further in this direction, in fairness to the Government, than the last Government did, but they do need to be firm of purpose about stipulating criteria for admission and co-ordinated admission arrangements and about the issue of children who are excluded and then placed in another school because, as I have indicated to you in the document I have written, the tendency is for the most highly-rated schools to kick children out when they are kicking over the traces, but then not accept others. That is another issue of a very large metropolitan urban area compared to smaller metropolitan urban areas, where you can probably get people to take in each other's children in such circumstances. I have to be very careful here. I am not suggesting that everybody can be taken in because probably a group of schools will need a unit to help kids who cannot take advantage of the school system. So I think admissions is very, very important indeed. Do you want to pause and come back on admissions?

292. I would like to see what you say about the other things, about diversity and post-16.

*(Professor Brighouse)* If I come to diversity of schools, then I presume they face the dilemma of "were they going to abolish specialist status and the money that went with it or were they going to capitalise on it and expand it". I believe that every school should be a specialist school and they ought to have the resource that goes with it because there is a huge danger at the moment that the pecking order means that those who are higher up the pecking order under the rules of becoming a specialist school get the extra resource. They already, if you look at the data, have the most advantaged children because of the pecking order system. That does not help the issue of social justice and every kid getting a fair chance of developing their talents, so the sooner it is directed to all schools the better. To introduce a further rung in what is called a ladder seems to me to start the process all over again, and I think they need to move boldly to create groups or circles of schools where each is a school in its own right but where children at 11 choose to join a school and another educational body, a collegiate for the sake of argument, and the collegiate will be made up of the group of schools and would offer before and after school programmes and occasional inset and share their intranet and share their professional development, and where that collegiate would have its results published as a collegiate as well as individual schools, but where the resourcing of any individual school would depend on the results of each of the schools, to encourage collegiality. For instance, inspection would be of the collegiate rather than the individual school, rather as they are doing on the 16 to 19 area-wide inspections where they have tried to overcome the over-competitive nature of colleges and their too great autonomy to the disadvantage of the common purpose. I think they have got to have the courage to move in that direction quickly if we are not to have serious consequences of under-achievement and social difficulty in large metropolitan urban areas.

293. And the third part of the question was the post 16.

*(Professor Brighouse)* My federation or collegiates would, I believe, also incorporate the university presence in those large metropolitan urban areas. Do not forget I have been saying large metropolitan urban areas because I think there are different considerations in both the large town or the small city and in county areas. There you have got disproportionate provision of further education and universities. If in Birmingham, instead of there being 75 schools, there were, for example, 15 collegiates, just for the sake of argument, it would not be impossible to have a bespoke relationship, indeed a partnership with or an associate involvement with both a college and a university. You could then start to be on a virtuous circle of expectation, achievement and shared expertise.

294. Do you think the division of responsibility between the LSCs and local authorities and the Connexions Service—

*(Professor Brighouse)* It is unhelpful, and it is likely to lead to incoherence.

295. Can we come back to the admissions point in more detail then. What specifically, if you were framing new legislation on admissions, would you like to see in that legislation?

*(Professor Brighouse)* I would like to see it being determined that in certain areas there is one co-ordinating admissions agency. I would say let it be the local education authority but I do not feel that passionately. It is an administrative task and it needs to be done fairly. If that were something that was done by another agency with everybody agreeing, because after all the authority itself is an admissions authority, so it may be possible to create an arm's length body to do that, that would be acceptable. That is number one. We definitely do need that. The second thing for me would be to examine the criteria for admissions. They have done it in the past. I would personally always give priority to children in public care because they get the worst deal of the lot; children with special educational needs; I think I am persuaded about siblings. My next priority would be that every parent should have a prior right over another parent to get into the school that is nearest to them. That is different to distance. I hope you are all aware of that. We can have endless discussions on that. What I am really saying is if I live here—and I have got in terrible hot water in the past by doing things other than orally in a select committee—eight miles from the school and my nearest school was eight miles distant but the second person lived two miles from that school but one mile from another school, I would give the person who lived eight miles a priority over the person who lived one mile because they live two miles from another school. I hope this comes out well in the transcript! But you follow me. I think that is a terribly important principle. I would have that as my fourth. Now you are going to say how about co-ed, selection and faith. You do have to say wait a minute, if you have selective and independent schools, independent schools have the right of declaring their own admissions' arrangements, and I cannot see any government changing that, and as long as you have got selective schools they should declare within selection those same criteria, but if they are over-subscribed I would use selection but then moderate it by the issues that I

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**[Mr Chaytor Cont]**

have described too. If it were faith I would again introduce the faith element, I suppose. That is an interesting proposition because in Northern Ireland, as you probably know, there is no priority given to faith by faith schools.

296. Is that right?

(*Professor Brighouse*) Forgive me if I say you had better do your homework! I was an adviser to the Burns Report and when they said that to me, I said, "Are you really telling them that I am an atheist and I live next to this Catholic school that they have got to give priority to me over a Catholic that lives half a mile away?" they said, "Absolutely." Indeed, they said they would probably be more welcome than the Catholic who lives half a mile away. I understood what they were saying. I said, "Are you really sure that is right?" And apparently in the 1970s that was introduced as measure to overcome sectarianism. By the way, that is why I would push my collegiate like mad because that would help overcome the ghetto effect of different groups. So in our country you might have faith as a proposition. I do not think on the mainland you could get to the position which is the case in Northern Ireland, that it is enough to provide the school with a missionary intent, because we are not like that here on this side of the water. So I would let faith apply as a criteria and that is as far as I would go.

297. Would you include atheism and humanism on a par with other faiths?

(*Professor Brighouse*) If there were a school that wanted to declare itself a humanist school, I would go along with that. I am not sure that a humanist—You are going to get me into territory that I do not want to get into.

**Paul Holmes**

298. You were saying earlier about if you were giving weighting factors, the school is most important, then the government, and then the LEA. However good a school is, it has very much got to work within the framework government sets. One of the frameworks that schools complain a lot about is league tables, tests and exams. It is said that our kids are the most tested and examined in the world. What would your comments be on the league tables and various tests and exams? How would you like to see that reformed?

(*Professor Brighouse*) It is back to my point about assessment. It is very very difficult, although I do remember that Kenneth Baker said when introducing the Education Reform Act of 1988 that it was essential that assessment should be at once diagnostic, formative—and I welcome that bit—summative and informative. I thought that was saying a square should be a circle. You cannot do that. That is to say the moment you move from formative and sharing things and get into informative and summative assessment is the moment you are putting at risk the formative assessment of kids. As adults we go cope with the comparative, but they are still children. The danger with the league table approach is that it accentuates the pecking order with parental choice. I have argued that I would move towards collegiate publication of

results and individuals within it. Quite honestly, I do not care about people finding out what the Birmingham results are. I do not mind comparing them with Bury and the Isle of Wight and Barnsley and Sheffield and Bristol and Kirklees and parts of Kent and Medway.

**Mr Chaytor**

299. I would have thought it was very helpful to compare with them.

(*Professor Brighouse*) I really do not mind doing it because on the whole I do not think that many parents are going to choose between Birmingham and Barnsley. If they did, there would be only one choice.

**Ms Munn**

300. Barnsley!

(*Professor Brighouse*) But the more local you get, the more dangerous it becomes. Nevertheless, comparative information is hugely important because it enables you get leading edge stuff into practice. The answer to your very uncomfortable question is I think there is growing evidence that the over-examination and the over-focus on attainment, which I am totally for, has its down sides and consequences in terms of kids' motivation—the kids who are good at other things that are not assessed widely. If you look at what we assess, it is so heavily skewed towards information and individual recalling of that information with the aid of memory and, thinking about it, the secondary curriculum is not very good at team assessment nor at finding a way of giving credit to a wide range of other activities within the school that matter hugely to all of us. In that respect I think you ought to look while you are at it, at a student survey, particularly work that pioneered by Keele University and is still running with a huge database of student perceptions about schools, because that becomes a proxy for what school ethos is like and children's attitude to schools. I have tried to obfuscate and the simple answer is they have not helped.

**Chairman**

301. We have got tests at seven, 11, and 14, course work at 15 and assessment at 16, 17 and 18. You have talked sympathetically about a baccalaureate and George Dixon School we were at yesterday have introduced that.

(*Professor Brighouse*) Of course, this is the stuff of dangerous headlines, but if you took seriously the assessment of those basic competencies and if you looked to key skills—communication, numeracy and ITC—they are crucial but so are those peripheral skills of problem-solving, being able to assess how you learn and take on your learning and working in teams. If you took that seriously, you can begin to see that, with reform, tests at 11 and tests at 14 would be quite good in that respect. They need a little bit of pushing up of the ICT competence. You could start to do that. If you did that at 16 it would look very odd. So if I had a reform it would be to magnify the importance of 11 or 14 around those basic territories

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and then turn my attention to 18 or 19 because one of the down sides of 16 is that it is still referred to as the school leaving age. We do not want it to be the school leaving age. If I had to sacrifice one, that would be the one I would want to take out.

**Paul Holmes**

302. Do you see a future for the GCSE?

(*Professor Brighouse*) I am sure there is a future for GCSEs. But you ask for my opinion and I would say there should not be one. There should be one test at 14 relying on teacher assessment. We spend so much more on exams and inspection, ten times as much as any other developed country. Teachers are now going to get paid on their performance. They are the ones that mark the papers, after all, but they do it at a distance, so going for 14 and 18 or 19 would seem to be sensible.

**Chairman**

303. So there would be a graduation certificate for those people who left school at 16?

(*Professor Brighouse*) For 16? No, I would be encouraging people to take an accumulated diploma at 18 or 19, whether they were in the work place or whether they were in education. In America they get a profile of what they have achieved, even at degree level, compared with our absolute summative information. I would go for that.

304. Can we take you back really again to what our inquiry is about because in the Birmingham experience, as we are going to be calling it for a long time to come, that is what has driven this through. Of course, we have been interested in other things and we have not looked at secondary education. To push you a little bit more on the collegiates, in one sense I know your answers to previous questions show that you have your reservations about much of the Government's enthusiasm for specialist schools, and that you would like to see specialisms rolled out to all schools. That is the Government's intention, is it not; 50 per cent and then onwards and upwards as fast as the resources are available. Tell us a little more about the collegiate system because reading the material I have seen of yours and hearing your answers to questions this morning, it does seem in a sense that you are a person who would like to go back to the true comprehensive ideal. You are enough of a realist to know that is not going to happen so you are trying to find a mechanism that maintains and reinforces some of those traditional ideals of people who want the true comprehensive. Are you trying to reassert the pure ideals behind the comprehensive system in the collegiate system? Is that what it is all about?

(*Professor Brighouse*) It is a very tricky issue. The first thing is I do not believe that comprehensive education has been achieved, in the sense of people wanting children across the ability range when they are defining that ability as the capacity to pass standardised, selective tests at 11 or, if they are not tests, assessments at that age and they might be represented by level six, level five, level four, level three, level two in the national curriculum test at 11. I think that has only been achieved where everybody in the locality sends their children to a school in rural

and county areas. I think that the small city and large town achieved it at first but it has been pulled apart. If I may say so, when you look at some of the areas you represent—and I was thinking in particular of Bury—Bury has got some green around it, it does act as a magnet, I guess, from Salford and Manchester. I do not want to get into a discussion about Bury but it is moderately well-off area. For example, only one of your schools has got 35 per cent free school meals and that is the top by about ten per cent. In Birmingham the average is 35, so I think socio-economics plays a part in this. It has only ever been realised in those areas. In the large metropolitan urban areas it has not. If the word “comprehensive” was such a good word, why did none of the schools use the word “comprehensive” in their title, because none of them do? It has become a word that we cannot have reasonable discourse about. If you said to me, “What do I want in terms of schooling?” I would be really pleased if kids during their teenage years came into contact and had sets of experiences of kids from a full range of diverse backgrounds. I would want that because socially that is an important issue. Educationally I would want them to have the best possible staffing structure available to them. I would want them to have that expertise wholly available to them. I would want the full expertise brought within their reach. I would want a curriculum that suited them individually, if that were at all possible. I would want them to have progress at the rate they needed to have progress. I would want them to think that they were citizens not just of Birmingham, not just of the UK but they had worldwide responsibilities one to the other. That is easy to do in a metropolitan urban area, in a sense, because we represent that world. I want all of that. I do not think that the individual school can do that. So my answer to the question is really I do not think an individual school at secondary level in most of our country can be truly comprehensive, if you mean it like that. I would want to reject the word “comprehensive”; I prefer the word “collegiate”. I want a collegiate ideal. I want people to understand that they are inter-dependent and that that is to their advantage and, therefore, I want to substitute that for what I think people in a different era set out to do before we had all these changes socially, both within our communities, within our countries and globally. I would want a different ideal and it would be a collegiate ideal where you accept that you belong both to an individual school and a wider community, and that the individual school you belong to made sure that you had sets of experiences that brought you into contact with other people.

305. But one thing we know about human beings is that they respond with fierce allegiance, almost more fiercely and more attached, the smaller the unit is. To give you an example of my own area. People will wax lyrical and get passionate about Huddersfield but they will not get passionate about Kirklees. The identity problem that some of us see about collegiates is that you would have to be very careful because you do need that attachment and that passion about an organisation and if you are not careful the collegiate would be too big, too amorphous and just be an administrative entity, and surely it would not work if it was just an administrative entity?

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**[Chairman Cont]**

(*Professor Brighouse*) It certainly would not work. It should not be an administrative entity, that is not its rationale. Its rationale is to bring together the teachers of like interest, to increase the sum of their intellectual curiosity, to make professional development together, to make sure they did come into contact with the further education and higher education community. Do not tell Brummies that you cannot identify with a big place; Brummies do.

306. Do they feel passionate about the West Midlands?

(*Professor Brighouse*) No, they do not, absolutely not. They do not feel passionate about things that are smaller as well. They do feel quite passionate about the English football team actually. I do not think size is necessarily the issue. I think how organisations are run makes the difference as to whether people identify with them. I am absolutely sure that if a collegiate were identifying awards and had sports teams, etcetera, etcetera, people would begin to identify. People would identify in a way that they really like. If it were a substitute for a boring LEA and a dull old administrator like me, and I can think of other smaller groups that appear to be administrative within the city, then I am not absolutely sure that it would work, but it would work if—

**Mr Chaytor**

307. I think the concept is really interesting, because it is very largely what has applied in a local authority like Bury for the last 25 years, ever since it went comprehensive. It is a collegiate and there is this dual identity between the wider neighbourhood. How many years do you think it would take before a collegiate in Birmingham would have a joint budget and joint management structure between a school like King Edward's Grammar School and George Dixon School?

(*Professor Brighouse*) Until you brought in the illustration, I was comfortable. When you gave the illustration—if I took the Catholic Partnership rather than the King Edward Partnership, the Catholic schools do identify with the Catholic partnership, and it overcomes that problem. But it has taken them ten years to get to a point where they are. They do pool budgets, they have got shared management, they do pull people together, they do have pupil experiences, and they are acting as a coach to the development of our collegiates. I think our collegiates will add impetus to the greater movement towards collegiates. The Catholics did it with absolutely no outside encouragement at all. I would say it will take three, four or five years.

308. There is a mutuality of interest within a Catholic partnership that there is not within—

(*Professor Brighouse*) I am absolutely sure if you ask me how the Oaks Collegiate will be going in two or three years' time that it will be impressive and it will be making progress both in professional development of people, opportunities, and the use of the learning technologies, and people will not want to go back. I am confident because I know the people. I know the staff and teachers and support staff and they will make it work. When you introduce the

wider possible disagreements, then I think you are talking about longer periods. For instance, I would have—and this is heresy but why not have the heresy—independent schools involved in the collegiate. Why should they not be involved in the collegiate and pool some of their resource? Indeed, we have got one of our collegiates seriously thinking about doing that with an independent school. The King Edward Foundation has had a profound influence on the city. I have had some discussions with the King Edward Foundation and I am going to have some more discussions with them because they are a collegiate in themselves. I think they identify with the individual school rather than the whole, very frequently, and I admire the way that the Foundation makes sure that they all have fair shares. But when you look at the King Edward Foundation's original purpose, then I would hope in the spirit of co-operation that they would want to join in the collegiates. Do not forget that there are long histories and long determinations that things have been in a certain direction and it is going to require a lot of energy and a lot of shared moral purpose and a determination. If we really want for other people's kids what we want for our own kids we need some solution like this. I am not unhopeful.

**Chairman**

309. To turn back to Birmingham for a moment and bring you back to the gap that seems to be here. If you look at the stats in terms of skills that Birmingham people have today and the skills that Birmingham needs today and tomorrow, all the evidence shows that there is a skills gap. What struck us as we talked to people that we have met this week—and they were very forthcoming with their hopes and aspirations for the future—many of them kept saying it is an odd world, is it not, where we are in Birmingham are building things, constructing things, all sorts of stuff is going on here that needs people with good skills, craft skills very often, and yet at the same time there are large numbers of young men and women who are unemployed and who have no aspiration to get those skills. With so many organisations here, as in all metropolitan areas, at some level one gets the feeling that they are not all knitting together quite well enough to cross this skills gap. This Committee in a sense is responsible for this. We spend a lot of our time on education and not enough perhaps on skills. It does seem in a city like this that there is this gap and no-one really is doing much about it. We have found there is tremendous potential for young people who are not going on to higher education. All the information is they are not going on to higher education but they have a lot of talent and no-one is giving them a chance to get the skills to enhance themselves.

(*Professor Brighouse*) You have had evidence from the Learning and Skills Council and they have done a pretty good analysis and are pretty clear that they are working with our *Excellence in Cities* partnership in order to ensure that there is a better match and understanding of what is needed in future. I have a caveat, which is that our manpower planning record is not a very good one. If you had in the 1970s turned out lots of car workers in Birmingham they might be

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unemployed now, and yet they were encouraged to think that was the case. If you think of the rate of change, our capacity to predict what is needed is a bit doubtful, so I take a slightly different view from yours, and I know that yours is much better founded, and that is I would argue that I want all the young people to believe that they have got talent, that they should give it absolutely everything to develop that talent in whatever direction that talent is taking them, without too much regard for the local communities because as I hear them now, they say, "There isn't a job in Shard End", and I am wondering, "Why are you thinking about Shard End." They say, "There isn't a job in Birmingham", and I am thinking, "Why are you thinking of Birmingham?" because the more educated you are the more you are widening the horizons of what you can do. The fact that two of my children live and work in the United States, and always will do, is a matter of regret because I cannot get there as often and see them and those particular grandchildren, but I am pleased that they saw that the horizon was wider than a local or a national horizon and, frankly, if we have a shortage of bricklayers just at the moment and we have a shortage of plumbers—and, as I understand it, they can command a salary of £60,000 a year to be a bricklayer and an Aston Villa footballer can earn £60,000 a week—I cannot say the bricklayer is under-paid. I am not noticing that the buildings are not going up. They seem to be going up at a rate of knots. What I would want is for all our population in Birmingham to believe that they can contribute to the world and that they have got a special talent and they can do it. I do mean all of them. I do not want to restrict it. They have all got a talent of different sorts. Many of those with special educational needs have a talent for people, for example, that is enviable or they have got a talent where their barriers to learning do not get in the way of them doing it. I would not want to get too preoccupied with circumscribing geographically the match of skill need with pupil aspiration.

310. I was not trying to drag us back to the 1960s version of manpower personnel planning. I suppose what I was really trying to get at was the fact that many of us discontent about education in schools at the schools I went to and you went to. At some of the schools we have looked at here perhaps this is less true, but traditionally in a typical classroom you have seen all the awards and plaudits go to the traditional academic child who is bright, passes exams, gets ticks, Brownie points and all the rest. There is a very large percentage of that class that very rarely gets ticks and Brownie points and passes at the highest level of exams. Why I am asking you is because here you seem to have instituted a system that rewards and encourages the self-esteem of the others.

*(Professor Brighouse)* Certainly I would say that is what we are trying to do. If you look back to our guarantees, that is what we set out to do. That is why we have promoted the idea of Gardner's view of intelligence. Back to your point about what do you do with kids at risk? You should take a profile of their preferred learning styles and their range of talents when they go to secondary school. Certainly we have tried to do that but it is within a national context

which still emphasises the elements that you are describing. Lots of the things you have asked me in terms of questions are institutional viruses that get in the way of a—and I almost used the word—comprehensive view of human talents and achievement. But you are putting your finger on an important issue which is the marking systems which operate within schools, the groupings of children within schools, the awards arrangements within schools are speaking volumes to the children about what is or is not valued. I think it is terrific that so many of our schools have a catholic view of talent, intelligence and success. It is good for the kids because they are very different.

**Jonathan Shaw**

311. One of the issues that we have discussed this morning and which has been raised throughout our visit, is the attainment of African Caribbean boys in particular. Should the Government be seriously concerned about this, particularly because of the lack of role models in the classroom, and adopt a market force approach, in the way that they have for overcoming the shortage of teachers with £6,000 to do a PGCE and with further financial incentives for subjects where there are shortage such as maths and science. Should the Government think, "If we are so short of African Caribbean teachers, should we pay them more and offer them more financial incentives?"

*(Professor Brighouse)* Until the very last I thought this was a nice easy question I could answer, but the little bit at the end made me realise that it was a very, very tricky question indeed. There is no doubt that individual schools have made a difference to African Caribbean children across the board. We can show you examples of that both at primary level and secondary level. You will have heard of our "Raising of African-Caribbean Achievement". Through key stage one and two, and now going through key stage three, we are tracing a group of pupils at secondary school to see their achievement and see what are the issues that matter. Role models are important, of course they are, and the more people we can attract into our schools that reflect a diverse range of both our faiths and ethnic background the better would be the performance. Indeed, irrespective of that, I think that all our teachers need to set out within a community like this to learn more about another culture, whatever that other culture is. It would so improve our cultural understanding and avoid us missing each other and passing each other, which is happening. You must have received evidence that there is a perception that that is happening. All those things need to be done. If you ask me would I pay somebody more because they are of a particular ethnic background, the answer is no I would not. Not for that reason.

**Chairman**

312. Have you read Professor David Gillborn's report commissioned by an organisation in the City on African Caribbeans?

*(Professor Brighouse)* Yes, I have.

313. Did you agree with the findings?

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**[Chairman Cont]**

(*Professor Brighouse*) The broad thrust of the findings, yes. I have got criticisms of that report, do not get me wrong, but the broad thrust of the finding, which is that we have got a long way to go in order to listen to and to gain the confidence of the various communities, is right. The fact that some of those communities do have trust is a good beginning but there is a long, long way to go. That is the thrust of the report and in that sense, yes, I accept that. In practice, I think that the report uses our data and a number of opinions, and what we had hoped we would get was some comparative data from other places and practices from other places. What we have done in Birmingham is create a database that is enviable and we try to describe our practices, but we are desperate to know of other people's practices that work. We went to Professor Gillborn in the hope that he would be able to give us that but he has pointed out to us that a) he is bound by the confidentiality of the study he did for DfES and b) he confided to us he thought there was so little information in other places that we would not be able to learn from it. The last I found really worrying.

**Valerie Davey**

314. Does the scope have to be within this country? One of the things that Bristol has done recently in its police force is to bring overseas police on secondment. Is that a possible option within the context we are now speaking?

(*Professor Brighouse*) I am all in favour of secondments and I am all in favour of learning from other places. For instance, we have a sister city, Chicago, and we have done some in-depth comparisons with Chicago. I would certainly be arguing that, for example, if London wants to solve its problems it should look at what has been happening in New York. International comparisons are hugely important and they are becoming much more important. Secondments are a very good way of doing it. If you are moving into the territory of shall we recruit people—

315.—No.

(*Professor Brighouse*)—Good, because I do not think that is right.

**Chairman**

316. We have been quite impressed by your strategy to tackle the behaviour of particular groups of pupils and we went to your PRU yesterday and had an interesting talk across the board about pupil behaviour and how one deals with it in an intelligent way. Do you think the way you have done that has helped you retain staff? Is retention in the city better because you have better mechanisms than perhaps other local education authorities?

(*Professor Brighouse*) If you will forgive me for saying so, I think your judgment is too generous. I think our service is excellent but it could be improved, and we could learn a lot more from other places. You are picking on an area where I am going away feeling that although we looked at that issue and got lots of commendation for looking at it right at the beginning—and we had some reports on excluded kids both at primary and secondary level

about what we should doing, the schools made a lot of effort and that was good, we should have returned to it more frequently. I know my successor is going to have to return to that issue and examine the issue of behaviour from three points of view—what is in the child, what is in the community, and what is in the school. At the moment they are a bit out of kilter and all three need looking at. We have done lots of good work but I would not want us to be claiming that we are exceptional in that respect.

317. Do you think that sort of work helps in teacher retention?

(*Professor Brighouse*) It does undoubtedly. If you have got a very clear idea about curriculum and behaviour and you have got a good support service, of course it makes a difference. Incidentally, you really ought to look at those pupil surveys I was mentioning from Keele because when they started, which I think was in about 1990, children were asked about whether they were distracted by behaviour in class across the whole nation, it was a very big survey, and around about 29 per cent said they were distracted and could not get on with their work. That figure is now 40 per cent. That is a lot. Are you with me? So there is an issue. Secondly, if you examine that school by school, which nobody has done—nobody has done—it varies between 6 per cent and 60 per cent. You would have thought somebody ought to be researching in depth the schools that are very low and the schools that are very high to see if you could come to some general conclusions. I could guess what they would be and some of them would be the point you have made, which is you need good support from the outside and maybe some of the initiatives that have been taken by the government under *Excellence in Cities* are going to help even more, like the learning mentors and learning support units on site, etcetera.

**Ms Munn**

318. I want to follow up on this issue of teacher retention and teacher recruitment because it is an issue raised pretty regularly with the Select Committee. Some of the issues we have just looked at are around pupil behaviour. Another issue which is often raised is teacher workload and the impact that has on both recruitment and retention. The thing I noticed in all the schools I went to was that they were using additional funds to do precisely what teachers want, which is to set in place structures and mechanisms that took off the teachers tasks that were not particularly teaching—setting up reprographic departments or home/school liaison for picking up very early kids not in school that morning and what is happening with that. Is that something which has been led from the schools or the local education authority?

(*Professor Brighouse*) We have been aided in that by the professional teachers' associations who have urged us to consider those issues and give advice to schools to try to help schools think of it very perceptively. So, yes, we have urged that but I think there is an awful lot more we can do. We are glad that some of our schools are part of the national in-depth look at that. We have got one of our primary schools involved and I think there were 40 involved across

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**[Ms Munn Cont]**

the country, although I am not sure of the exact number. We have encouraged other schools to join in, to be associates of that, to learn about teacher overload. There are lots of things that affect overload. If you ever go into a large group of teachers and ask them to put their hands up if they enjoy teaching, you will get loads and loads of people putting their hands up. If you go in and you say, "Put your hand up if you enjoy marking?" you might occasionally get one or two who enjoy marking! I am making this point because teacher overload, the planning which has become greater as a result of accountability in OFSTED, and the marking which has become crucial in terms of OFSTED reports, and always should be crucial in terms of the kids, take more time than teaching, as any teacher will tell you. When you talk about overload, it is easy for them to say, "Look at what I have got to do, but actually the thing I am dreading is the marking and the preparation because it is really, really difficult." I think we should give far more attention to those two big issues than is being given. For instance, teachers planning their work together is undoubtedly more energy-creative than doing it alone, and doing it in school rather than at home on a Sunday makes a difference. Using the learning technologies—and I mention here Active Maths as an example which is a key stage 3 thing from one of the commercial suppliers, I think it is REA—takes the heat out of both planning and marking and substantially reduces the marking load. Some of the things I was describing to you about formative assessment and assessment for learning takes the heat out of the marking. There are loads and loads of issues it seems to me should be debated about planning and marking which I think would have a profound effect on teacher workload. We are not having that debate widely and openly enough. If you ask schools when did you last have a debate about marking from that point of view, you usually get a resounding silence, so I personally would like to push those two issues.

319. I suppose the other end of that was recruiting not just specifically to Birmingham but recruiting people generally in the teaching profession. One of the examples we saw was the Graduate Teaching Programme which seemed to bring people in from other professions and where they have got life experience that gives them a presence in the classroom. They are getting a lot out of the benefits of teaching. What more can we be doing to make teaching an attractive profession? All the young people we saw in schools were saying, "Our teachers are great, our teachers are brilliant", and when we asked, "How many of you want to become a teacher?" there were very, very few of them. What should we be doing?

(*Professor Brighouse*) There are three things I will say immediately. One point is a small one and it does relate back to your question about the recruitment of people from ethnic minorities. We run a thing called MERITT, which is Minority Ethnic Recruitment Into Initial Teacher Training. We have run it for years. It was working with Wolverhampton University initially and now Westhill which is part of Birmingham University to say to people if you have got certain qualifications you are at instructor level and we can develop you into being a teacher. That is

one way of doing it. We have done that and worked with higher education in the area so that their recruitment into the different ethnic minority communities will mean more teachers for us in the long run. That sort of approach helps. The second thing is—and I regret you have not done this and it is a fault in my thinking about it—I would urge you to take evidence from the College of Food, Fashion Tourism and Creativity, which is an HE institution immediately outside here, because they have got a ladder of opportunity which grows people locally in addition to the graduate route so that people who are—and I would never want to call anyone a classroom assistant—learning assistants—can improve their skills as learning assistants and while working get themselves into a route that increases their qualifications and gets them into teaching. That is particularly important in metropolitan urban areas where you are trying to tackle employment, so you want to multiply the para-professional jobs but increase the ladder of higher education qualifications for a local community because it gives a community strength. My third would be relating to your point which is around those young people who want to go into teaching. I get invited to go to awards evenings lots, as I expect you do. You must be faced with the conundrum, as I am, that if you are meeting 400 young people, how do you make that moment feel an individual moment. I have solved it, and I invite you to take part in a wider research project, in terms of year nine, ten, 11 and 12. I am a bit pushed in years seven and eight where I ask them which books they like and what their hobbies are. When I get to years nine, ten, 11 and 12, I ask them what they are going to do in life. At the end I sometimes tease the head and school by saying, "We spend £130 million each year on OFSTED to see that our schools are alright. I can do this in a matter of minutes. Do you know", I say, "if on an evening like this I ask what they are all going to do, if none of them want to be teachers, I am in a bad school." I usually leave it there for a while to hang in the air! I have to say I am not so cruel that I use it when there is a bad answer. There are lots of kids who want to be teachers. For instance, in Great Barr I stopped counting at 40. What I would do in year 12 after the GCSEs, where there is a sense of commitment that they do want to be teachers, I would have a work shadowing programme, I would have a bursary programme, I would make them feel really good about teaching, I would let them see lots of experience, I would give them tasters, I would say, "This is the noblest profession of all. This is the profession that creates society and you could not be doing a better thing." If we all did that—and higher education could perhaps cough up the money to make the link, it is not much—we would start to cure the problem. There are three things we could do.

**Mr Chaytor**

320. This week we have visited I would imagine about 12 schools in Birmingham. Not all of us have seen all 12 because we have divided it. The 12 schools have been uniformly impressive and the headteachers have been hugely impressive also. How typical are those 12 schools of Birmingham's 80 or so secondary

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[Mr Chaytor Cont]

schools? What is the balance between Birmingham secondary schools as to the outstanding, the middling and those that need more help? What is your assessment of the state of secondary schools as a whole?

(*Professor Brighouse*) If I could refer you to a bit of paper I gave you where I think there were eight categories of secondary school. You have visited a super selective school, you have visited a comprehensive plus school—in my terms—you have visited a selective school, you have visited a comprehensive minus school, you have visited a secondary modern minus school, and in my terms you have visited a secondary other school, so you have visited almost the full range. You have not visited a comprehensive school in terms of the definitions I gave, accepting the definitions I gave you at the beginning. They are all very well led and they are all extremely well staffed. Some of them cause more concerns than others. My assessment of them is that it will vary. I certainly do not want to get into public—

321. It is the assessment of the others.

(*Professor Brighouse*) You have seen a typical range. Is it on the public record as to where you have been?

322. We have seen examples of a full range of the categories of schools.

(*Professor Brighouse*) You have certainly seen super selective, you have seen selective, you have seen comprehensive plus, you have seen comprehensive minus, you have seen secondary modern, you have seen secondary modern minus, you have seen secondary other. I am not sure you have seen a comprehensive school by the definition I gave you. That does give you a feel of the range you have visited. You have visited the full range. What they had in common was a real commitment and energy, with imaginative leadership. I am absolutely sure you will have different sorts of visits. I am sure you will have spotted that but they were shown to you in a different way. In all our schools that are doing really well in challenging circumstances, nobody is saying, "What more can you expect from backgrounds like this?" None of them are saying that. Some of them are facing hugely challenging circumstances. All are working flat out but they are the full range and they are typical of Birmingham. You would say that we have probably got that full range. For example, if you ask me, we have got quite a few super selective, we have got lots of selective, as you know, we have probably not got many comprehensive pluses but we have got a few, we have got one or two comprehensives, we have loads of comprehensive minuses. If you want me to, I could give you my view of which are where. It was very representative.

323. It was representative of categories of schools but was it—

(*Professor Brighouse*) And representative of the city.

324.—was it representative of qualities of headteacher and was it representative of the positive ethos and energy?

(*Professor Brighouse*) Yes it was, of our secondary schools, yes it was. In other words, if you ask me to rank those headteachers I would not do it in public,

of course not, but if you pushed me against a wall and said, "Now give me a profile of comparative skills of those headteachers," then I start by saying, "You are in Birmingham so I would expect them to be very high quality", but I could describe to you the strengths and weaknesses of the different leaders you met.

325. In total out the 80 or so, how many secondary schools do you have concerns about now, if any, or what percentage of the total?

(*Professor Brighouse*) The percentage of the total I have worries about? It is probably about five, six, seven per cent.

326. And ten years ago, how many would you have had worries about?

(*Professor Brighouse*) I do not know. I did not know it well enough. When I came I did not know it well enough. I was worried about everything. Ignorance is not bliss, I have to say, when you have got a job like mine. I do not know. I would not like to say that. All the evidence of the two OFSTED reports and their section 10s and the analysis is that there are fewer and it has improved. Again the performance on socio-economics is very good. I am worried because I do not want this to be a "labour of Hercules" or whatever it is. It is probably not a labour of Hercules; is it Sisypus?

327. Hercules had twelve tasks; Sisypus had one but quite a big one.

(*Professor Brighouse*) Systemically because of the issues we have talked about and I have outlined in the paper, even if I help others I am worried about others taking their place as a result of parental choice and all the other issues, which is why I want a collegiate.

#### Chairman

328. In a way have you not described in a very real sense the dilemma for the Secretary of State for Education at any time? One is always trying to improve the schools we have but as you improve a band of schools you know there is always going to be another band of schools that becomes of even greater importance to you.

(*Professor Brighouse*) I am suggesting that there are systemic ways of ensuring that that does not happen. In other words, you do not have to have ladders and escalators; you can have virtuous circles, and successful organisations can achieve that. For instance, it is noticeable for me when I go into Tesco's, which I do, that the floor manager says we need to know that we are 120th on the list of successful Tesco stores! I get a sense of a consistency of quality that is a network that is working well. I think you could apply that and you could make collegiates which would be successful, especially if we brought all the players in—the selective, the super selective. Are you with me? Of course we could. I think it is something worth going for. You ask about the Secretary of State and I think all Secretaries of State have not quite managed to look at the factors that I have outlined right at the end of that paper—teaching, assessment, curriculum, learning, organisational arrangements within the school, the relationship within the curriculum within the school. Without a doubt how that is organised, or not

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**[Chairman Cont]**

organised as the case may be—timetables, admission arrangements, planning of school places—is very important. These are all tasks that have been done separately. Remember that people said that the fault with the national curriculum is that they went away severally to design all the curriculum areas so that coherently it became more than enough. In a curious way exactly the same could be said of the planning of secondary education. We have not looked at the whole lot. We have looked at little bits and lots of little bits rather than the impact of one to the other and the totality. What I am essentially inviting people to do is to look at the totality and then look at individual bits to adjust them to make it better for all kids.

**Chairman**

329. I think that is a good note on which to end. You have been stoic in answering our questions for over two hours, Professor Brighouse. It has been a delight to question you. Can I thank you again, not only for this performance today but for the time we have had in Birmingham. I hope the report that we write will meet your highest expectations

*(Professor Brighouse)* Thank you ever so much. It has been a pleasure. Thank you for coming to Birmingham. You will have contributed to the energy of the city and that is vital. Thank you for all the questions you have asked. I have not enjoyed all of them. Paul, I am sorry I started talking to David when I should have been talking to you. I felt under a little bit of pressure and I am very, very glad that the session is over.